



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life: Materials, Intimacy and Being Creole in London and Seychelles

Mairi O’Gorman

PhD Social Anthropology
The University of Edinburgh

2019

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that no part of it has been submitted in any previous application for a degree. Except where I state otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signature:

Mairi O’Gorman
July 2019, Edinburgh U.K.

Abstract

This thesis interrogates discourses of *kreolite* (Creoleness) in the small island state of Seychelles, and among the Seychellois diaspora in London. While the literature on creolization often treats it as mobile and processual, transgressing the boundaries of the nation-state, for Seychellois in both places being Afro-Creole is underpinned by an idea of rootedness and tradition. Throughout the chapters, the thesis explores how relationships predicated on movement and variation can be accommodated within this understanding of *kreolite*, and how intersecting scales of national and familial intimacy are constituted by engagements with particular objects and materials. The chapters examine the arborescent imagery central to *kreolite* at the level of the nation-state, arguing that in Seychelles these must be understood in terms of plantation – as the central institution around which ‘traditional’ Creole life was historically centred, and as a process that implies the rooting of persons in the islands. The legacy of the plantation engenders particular relationships with land and property, the house and its contents, and inside and outside spaces that are understood by Seychellois in terms of a general tendency of living things to regenerate themselves. This regenerative capacity is extended by state actors – especially those working within cultural heritage and adjacent fields – beyond everyday objects, to include the nation. The Creole house, in particular, emerges as a central object of attention for cultural heritage practitioners, bringing together idealised notions of nation, family and gendered behaviour whilst, through its materiality, functioning as a point at which the negative aspects of intimacy (both mundane and occult) are operative. Through engaging the literature on material culture, the chapters show how the racialized notion of property on which the institution of the plantation was based informs present-day encounters with objects and artefacts among Seychellois artists, heritage practitioners, educators, and families. Treating these encounters as intimate ones, I show the ways that objects and materials are unruly, divergent, or accommodate meanings other than those endorsed by state-led conceptions of Seychellois heritage. Together, the chapters argue that it is the specific qualities of particular materials that constitute Creoleness at familial, national and transnational scales. It thus engages broader questions about the material qualities of national and racial imaginaries, and the role of historicity and culture concepts in naturalising them.

Lay summary

This thesis explores what it means to be Creole in two contexts: the Seychelles islands (a small archipelago in the Indian Ocean), and in the Seychellois community in London. These chapters draw on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in both contexts in order to understand different kinds of intimacy: between individuals in families, between citizens and the state, and between the geographically widespread countries and cultural traditions that contribute to the mixed Creole identity. The thesis argues that being Creole has meant different things in different times and places, and that the shifting properties of materials both stabilise a sense of what it means to be Creole, and accommodate divergence and reinterpretation. In particular, wood and materials derived from trees are significant for Seychellois understandings of Creole identity, as trees and plants are considered to have an innate capacity for regeneration that can be generalised across the natural world, human life, and culture. This ability to regenerate makes particular trees a key part of producing Creoleness in the islands; but traditional wooden houses and the objects in them also have regenerative qualities (both positive and negative). The inside of the house is thus valued positively in state imaginaries of Creoleness, but wild spaces outside the house are also being revalued as sites of national identity – particularly through the musical genre *moutya*, which is traditionally danced outside. This thesis argues that not only is national identity an intimate and material, rather than abstract, entity, but that the specific qualities of materials and objects are fundamental to understanding how such identities are produced.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Lay summary	4
Acknowledgements.....	8
Acronyms (and presidents)	9
Kreol glossary	10
Table of figures	12
Passages	14
Seychelles and West London	14
Flux and fixity	17
Maps and traces.....	26
<i>Créolité</i>	26
Creole objects (material and immaterial)	36
Creole intimacies.....	46
Map of the thesis	54
Archipelago	60
One history.....	61
Two parallel histories.....	70
A family history	74
Familiarity and strangeness	77
London	80
Seychelles.....	82
A note on languages.....	84
Key people.....	88
Chapter 1: Roots: Trees and Genealogies.....	90
Arborescence	91
A history of planting.....	95
Island-born.....	103
Family tree	111
<i>Lalang perdi</i>	118
The archivists	123
Chapter 2: <i>Later</i> (Land): Property and Inheritance.....	129
Creole properties	130

Island possessions	135
Inheritance: race and place	140
Inheritance: plots and discoveries	146
Property (real and imagined)	156
Chapter 3: Appearances: The Clean House	160
Home	161
Appearances.....	169
<i>Grann kaz</i>	170
<i>Lakaz Kreol</i>	175
<i>Pti lakaz</i>	179
Cleaning the house	183
The makeshift house	190
The changing house.....	200
Chapter 4: Disappearances: The Dirty House.....	206
Dirty things	207
<i>Kankan</i>	214
<i>Grigri</i> and <i>malfezans</i>	222
Afterlives	234
Family secrets.....	240
Chapter 5: Exile: Youth and Going Astray	248
<i>Ti Men</i>	249
<i>Drol</i> men	255
<i>Lazenes</i>	261
<i>Marons</i>	269
Exiles.....	275
Chapter 6: <i>Later</i> (Earth): Regeneration and Renaissance	283
Medicinal garden.....	284
Regeneration	288
Knowledge of good and evil	291
<i>Moutya</i>	301
Materials.....	303
Place	309
Physical	314
Metaphysical	321

Earth, secrets, rebirth	326
Conclusion	332
Works cited	344

Acknowledgements

I owe my thanks:

to the University of Edinburgh for the opportunity to undertake this research, and for funding travel and fieldwork-related costs.

to my supervisors, Laura and Marisa, for their patience, advice, reassurance and knowledge; and to Alysa Ghose, Elliott Oakley, Aglaja Kempinski and Ann-Christin Wagner for asking the right questions at the right times. To all of my colleagues and friends who have been supportive of me at this time.

to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, who generously granted me permission to carry out this research, as well as providing so many important resources, without which it would not have been possible. To the National Heritage division; to Jean-Claude Mahoune, Gabriel Essack, and Peter Pierre-Louis. To everyone at Seychelles Heritage Foundation for the opportunity to work with them: to Cindy Moka, Miriam, and to Micheline for the beautiful rug. To Nigel Henri and to all of the artists affiliated with the National Arts Council and SEYMAS; to ARTerial Network; to Keven Valentin and his dancers. To Eglia and Ferdinand for all the knowledge and peace I found in the garden.

In London: to Jed, Rita, Radiosesel, Vinn Goute and Coolkat Productions; to the Seychellois families who let me into their homes and lives.

In Seychelles: to all of my friends and family whom, in order to protect their anonymity, I cannot name here – especially if I ever lived with you, for welcoming me as if we had never been apart.

To my mother, Anna, and father, Michael; to William, my brother; and to my beloved, my Euan. I haven't words enough to express my gratitude.

Acronyms (and presidents)

Politics

Parti Lepep (People's Party)

The ruling party, originally known as the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP); subsequently the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF); and now, post-renunciation of socialism, *Parti Lepep*.

Linyon Demokratik Seselwa (LDS, Democratic Union of Seychellois)

The united opposition party, created from a coalition of the Seychelles National Party (originally the Seychelles Democratic Party), *Lalyans Seselwa* (Seychellois Alliance), and Seychelles Party for Social Justice and Democracy (SPSD).

Presidents

James Mancham (SDP), in office 1976 – 1977

France-Albert René (SPUP/SPPF), in office 1977 – 2004

James Michel (SPPF/PL), in office 2004 – 2016

Danny Faure (PL), in office 2016 – present

Others:

SHF = Seychelles Heritage Foundation

NAC = National Arts Council

NYS = National Youth Service

Kreol glossary

<i>animateur</i>	leadership role within National Youth Service
<i>bal Seselwa</i>	'Seychellois dance'
<i>bonnonm dibwa</i>	'gentleman of the woods,' traditional medicine practitioner
<i>bonvolonte</i>	plant used in traditional medicine; removes suspicion from those accused of crimes
<i>bonzour</i>	'hello'; greeting
<i>bouyon</i>	traditional stew of leafy vegetables
<i>bwa natte</i>	variety of wood native to Seychelles
<i>bwa takamaka</i>	variety of wood from the Takamaka tree, native to Seychelles
<i>coco de mer</i>	'coco of the sea'; fruiting plant endemic to Seychelles, which produces large nut
<i>danbwa</i>	'in the woods'; descriptor of particularly wild areas, often used to refer to the South of Mahé
<i>disan</i>	blood
<i>djembe</i>	traditional African drum
<i>dondosya</i>	a kind of zombie
<i>drol</i>	'funny'; eccentric or erratic
<i>fol</i>	mad
<i>galet</i>	type of hard cassava-bread, eaten plain
<i>grann blan</i>	'big white'; refers to the descendants of planters in Seychelles
<i>grann kaz</i>	'big house'; plantation house
<i>grigri</i>	from <i>gris-gris</i> ; magic, especially black magic
<i>herbalis</i>	herbalist
<i>kalou</i>	palm toddy
<i>kankan</i>	gossip
<i>kanmtole</i>	traditional dance form, considered European-influenced
<i>kapatya</i>	type of basket woven from coconut leaves
<i>koko fey</i>	coconut leaf
<i>kontredans</i>	traditional dance form, considered European-influenced
<i>kotis</i>	traditional dance form, considered European-influenced
<i>koudeta</i>	from the French ' <i>coup-d'état</i> ,' referring to the ejection of the Seychelles Democratic Party from government under the Seychelles People's United Party in 1977
<i>kourtwazi</i>	courtesy, politeness
<i>Kreol Seselwa</i>	the Seychellois Creole language
<i>kreolite</i>	from the French ' <i>créolité</i> ,' Creoleness
<i>ladob</i>	a kind of dessert made from root vegetables boiled in coconut milk
<i>lakaz Kreol</i>	the Creole house
<i>lalang</i>	literally 'tongue,' language

<i>later</i>	from the French ' <i>la terre</i> ': earth, soil, land, the ground
<i>latizann</i>	a medicinal tisane (herbal drink)
<i>lazenés</i>	youth
<i>leritaz</i>	heritage
<i>liberasyon</i>	liberation
<i>Madanm</i>	Mrs
<i>malfezans</i>	ill-will; often occult in nature
<i>maloya</i>	genre of Réunionnais traditional music
<i>maron(s)</i>	literally 'wild'; used to refer to those who escaped and resisted slavery, as well as certain plant and animal species
<i>metis</i>	in Seychelles denotes mixed-race Afro-Creole people; often suggests light eyes and skin
<i>moutya</i>	traditional dance form, considered African-influenced. Unique to Seychelles
<i>Msye</i>	Mr
<i>nanm</i>	ghost
<i>peau bef</i>	cowhide
<i>peau cabri</i>	goat's hide
<i>pirat</i>	literally 'pirate'; often refers to informal taxi drivers
<i>pti lakaz</i>	little house
<i>rasin napoleon</i>	Plant used to cure hernia in traditional medicine, Latin name: <i>flemingia strobilifera</i>
<i>Renesans Sosyal</i>	'Social Renaissance' – state movement to revitalise culture
<i>roul pomme d'amour</i>	'rolling the apple of love,' traditional courtship practice
<i>sega</i>	traditional dance form, considered African-influenced, existing across the Indian Ocean as well as in Seychelles
<i>sega-moutya</i>	fusion of <i>sega</i> and <i>moutya</i>
<i>sokwe</i>	traditional dance form, considered African-influenced
<i>sorsye</i>	witch
<i>tanbour moutya</i>	<i>moutya</i> drum
<i>ti men</i>	'little man'; name given to youths
<i>Tifin</i>	literally 'little drink'; reception of traditional wedding
<i>tinge</i>	traditional dance form, considered African-influenced
<i>tradisyon</i>	tradition
<i>vals</i>	traditional dance form, considered European-influenced

Table of figures

Figure 1. The Seychelles islands in relation to Africa (adapted from Google Maps by Mairi O’Gorman).....	19
Figure 2. A map of Mahé (Lionnet 1972:8-9).	20
Figure 3. A map of the main island, Mahé (not picturing the land reclamation that has occurred since the 1990s) (Benedict and Benedict 1982: ii).....	62
Figure 4. The coat of arms of Seychelles, depicting a <i>coco de mer</i> palm and giant tortoise (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons).	100
Figure 5. (top): <i>coco de mer</i> palm, Botanical Gardens (Mahé). Figure 6. (bottom): <i>coco de mer</i> nut, Fond Ferdinand (Praslin). Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	101
Figure 7. (top): dancers from the Zil’oKA troupe. Figure 8. (bottom): dancers from the Notting Hill Carnival troupe. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2015).....	109
Figure 9. A family tree compiled by an individual who cannot be named without compromising the anonymity of others (obvious identifying details have been removed). Both form and information were derived from the National Archives in Victoria (see Seychelles National Archives website 2019; some of the details can also be found in Maurel 2019) and completed by hand. Adapted and reproduced with permission by Mairi O’Gorman (2017).....	111
Figure 10. Graffiti-ed cacti outside the NCC and the Carrefour des Arts. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	113
Figure 11. Waste ground at the boundary of Belonie and Bel Eau, close to the centre of Victoria. The land is overgrown and marshy while on either side, new apartment complexes have been built. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	148
Figure 12. Social housing in Seychelles. Photograph by a young relative who cannot be credited without identifying others in this chapter (2016).....	167
Figure 13. The interior of Lenstiti Kreol, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016). ..	171
Figure 14. An East India Company chair with footrests, Plaine St Andre. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	173
Figure 15. <i>Lakwizin tradisyonel Seselwa</i> (traditional Seychellois kitchen) at Lenstiti Kreol, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	174
Figure 16. The craft village at Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	175
Figure 17. A traditional house at Mont Fleuri, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	176
Figure 18. A house at Mont Buxton, Bel Air district, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	179
Figure 19. <i>Lakaz Roza</i> at Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	180
Figure 20. Interior collages at <i>Lakaz Roza</i> , Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap, Mahé. Photography by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	182
Figure 21. Interior collages at <i>Lakaz Roza</i> , Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap, Mahé. Photography by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).....	183
Figure 22. John Vital and band providing music for <i>laserenad</i> (‘the serenade’, a procession from church to town hall) as part of the Tifin wedding event. Figure 23. (bottom): ‘bride’ and ‘groom’ (two German tourists on their honeymoon) seated with Minister Alain St Ange	

(centre) while members of the press photograph the event. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	198
Figure 24. (top): <i>The Tree of Life</i> , by Urny Mathiot and Jude Ally. Figure 25. (bottom): <i>SX3</i> , by Nigel Henri, Philip Volcere and Robert Alexis. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	210
Figure 26. The living room at my grandmother’s house. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	213
Figure 27. Horseshoe and playing card on the door of an old house, Mont Buxton. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	234
Figure 28. The former NYS Village at Cap Ternay, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	261
Figure 29. Masks by Egbert Marday, at La Misere. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	272
Figure 30. The garden of Ferdinand Vidot, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	287
Figure 31. The exterior of the house. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	288
Figure 32. (left): transplanted gros bom cutting. Figure 33. (right): white chillies. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	291
Figure 34. (top): packaged pieces of wood. Figure 35. (bottom): leaves and wood drying. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	295
Figure 36. (top): dried wood, with <i>latizann</i> recipes. Figure 37. (bottom): labelled wood and leaves. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	296
Figure 38. (left) and figure 39. (right): SHF Heritage Clubs learning to grow medicinal plants. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	300
Figure 40. (top): staging a shot with the Ministry photographer, Johnny Volcere. Figure 41. (bottom): preparing the <i>peau cabri</i> . Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	304
Figure 42. top: the marine plywood is shaped around a metal drum. Figure 43 (bottom): “ <i>I’n kas-e!</i> ” (It’s broken!) – removing the clamps to find that the plywood is brittle. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	306
Figure 44 (top): attempting to find a suitable frame at La Bastille. Figure 45 (bottom): the second attempt at shaping plywood. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	307
Figure 46. (top): soaked <i>peau cabri</i> . Figure 47. (bottom): fitting the <i>peau cabri</i> to the frame. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	308
Figure 48. SEYMAS <i>bal moutya</i> , Berjaya hotel, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	316
Figure 49. (left) and figure 50. (right): Keven Valentin’s band perform, with dancers, at Constance Ephelia (St Anne island). Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	317
Figure 51 (left) and figure 52. (right): late-night <i>moutya</i> at Au Cap. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).	318
Figure 53 (top): warming the drum at Bazar Labrin. Figure 54 (bottom): dancing. Stills from footage by William O’Gorman (2017), reproduced with permission.	320

Passages

Seychelles and West London

We made London into Seychelles as best we could. We had been to other parties where other families went about the same work, and we knew how they did it; then, too, we did things that we did not know were Seychellois, because we had done them for many years as a matter of course.

Nathan¹, young and wearing a smart, pressed shirt, arrived promptly at the house at 7pm. Uncle Frank arrived, as we had expected, much later than the time we had given him. The rest of the party had followed him by car from Heathrow, including Derrick and Irene and their pre-teen son. Food was set out buffet-style on the dining table, in a room that was small and full of books and knick-knacks: a carved *coco de mer* on the window sill, a mobile made of shells dangling from the light fixture, coasters bearing faded photographs of a beach without any people on it.

We had been cooking all day. My mother, wrapping her hair in a terrycloth turban, had made spiced lamb and sweet yellow rice, prawn and lentil curry, carrot and bitter melon salad. I had made the vegetable side dishes. Derrick brought octopus curry – a special treat, the octopus fresh from Billingsgate market – in a huge Tupperware container. To start, we served spring rolls and onion bhajis (ready-made, defrosted) with ketchup and sriracha hot sauce. We used the good crockery instead of the plastic picnic plates and cups we would use for ourselves, the thick paper napkins instead of kitchen towel. The women drank sweet white wine and the men cold beer, and we talked for hours about Seychelles

¹ 'Nathan' is a pseudonym – the same person appears elsewhere in this thesis under his own name. See **Key people** for further explanation.

and being Seychellois – partly because I had prompted it, partly because it was something everyone shared.

All the while, the little boy sat on the sofa between his parents and played quietly on a tablet, bopping his head to the R’n’B emanating from the television, ignoring the conversation of the adults in favour of the silent affection of his mother. He ate little of the food, knowing already what he liked – a heaping portion of rice, and the potatoes.

We were discussing what it meant to be Creole. This term, used in many contexts other than Seychelles, commonly suggests an identity that is mixed and hybrid, a blending of other discrete ‘cultures.’ The process of mixing itself is often characterised as linguistic, but is implicitly racialized, so that one not only speaks a Creole language but exists as a Creole person.

Our conversation in West London took place on the basis that we all understood this much. The question – an eternal one – was *what* kind of person a Creole person was. For Derrick, love for one’s children was central, and this love was expressed through sharing knowledge, tastes and habits. He looked at his son, a slight frown flitting across his face, aware that the boy was not eating everything. “I mean,” he said, “we spoil him here. That would never happen in Seychelles. In Seychelles, a child would never decide what they eat. You eat what you are given, you respect your elders.” This was how Creoleness was transmitted, how morality was internalised, how the family reproduced itself.

Nathan joked that the real root of this respect was the threat of corporal punishment, and Derrick laughingly agreed. But the little boy, to whom this stricter form of parenting was alien, smiled to himself and relaxed against his mother, and the adults all laughed indulgently.

Later, I would see all these patterns – down to Uncle Frank’s relaxed time-keeping – repeated at houses across London and on Mahé. The food was the same, the knick-knacks and the Tupperware were the same, and the question of what to do with the younger generation never went away. Sometimes, at these gatherings, the guests spoke of other such parties – in Australia, in Kenya, in the 1980s, in the 1950s. The same work was being done – the work of keeping *kreolite* (Creoleness) alive. This was an important issue among the diaspora and in Seychelles itself, at both an interpersonal and a national level. At the outset of my fieldwork, state engagements with Creole values took the form of a project of *Renesans Sosyal* (social renaissance) which aimed to morally and economically regenerate individuals, families and the nation. This project was described in terms of a five year plan and concrete policies, but such projects happened recurrently. For the state (and everyone else), reviving a Creole way of life was as much to do with a shared sense of what was undesirable as a set of common values.

Great emphasis was placed on the importance of respectability and appearances, the love of one’s children, and the cultivation of particular tastes, but these positive values were underscored by ambivalence. My interlocutors had both strict ideas about what was proper behaviour, and questions about it. Had traditional Creole values arisen from material necessity rather than moral virtue, and if so, were they proof that Seychellois were not good people? How could young people be persuaded to adopt habits that, in a connected, transnational world, they might consider backward and fussy? Was an attempt to revive such a way of life an admission that it was already dead? Implicit in all these questions was a tension between the singular nature of idealised national identity, and the messier reality of multiracial and transnational connections; a tension that was expressed as another kind of movement, between the inside and outside, the past and the future.

In this introduction, I give a brief overview of these passages between the fixed and the fluctuating. Subsequent sections map the theoretical trajectories which form the basis of my analysis. Finally, I provide a map for the thesis itself.

Flux and fixity

In making these questions ones of national identity, interlocutors evoked a “poetics” of nationhood, and a set of collective self-stereotypes, which they had to navigate within their own lives at a more individualised level (Herzfeld 2014:31-4). In Seychelles, the nation-state and the family are understood via an idea of *kreolite* that is reified and fixed; while historically *kreolite* has entailed forms of movement, flux and hybridity that inform present-day relationships and values. This thesis interrogates ideas of what it means to be Seychellois and Creole at the level of this public, outward-facing discourse, as it was articulated by interlocutors working in cultural heritage and various forms of creative practice. It also considers everyday life at the level of the home and the family, recognising that the two intersect and conflict in numerous ways.

I will argue that *kreolite* is produced through an engagement with materials, as the relationship between a nation-state and its people – wherever they may reside – is not only ideational but material. This is not to propose that either the nation, the state, or the family (institutions which intersect) lead an a priori existence *apart* from human ideations, nor that they are ideations *realised* as material in a narrow sense. Rather, ideas of the nation, the state and the family are ideas that are expressed and circulated materially (Anderson 2006; Billig 1995), but they are also claims about the nature of the material world. This thesis seeks to investigate a particular national materiality; the specific properties of the materials involved; their affordances and aesthetics; and the ways in

which they are fixed or mutable. All these elements contribute to a Seychellois sense of overarching moral values, a distinct way of life, and a way of engaging with the past via heritage preservation and art. It is through the material that the poetics of the nation-state “spaces itself out into the world” (Glissant 1997:1).

While *kreolite* takes material forms, these forms are variable. The transnationality of Seychellois families and individuals is part of this; global cultural heritage discourses, which exist across the borders of the nation-state, also play a role. Seychellois working with or alongside the machinery of the state to ‘preserve’ cultural heritage attempt, as much as is possible, to produce a bounded idea of *kreolite* that encompasses particular ideals of family life, sociality, and artistic expression. However, doing this work requires not simply the transmission of ideas and practices, but the production of properly Creole objects. This process submits the aims of the state to interpretation by visual artists, poets, musicians, and other bearers of ‘culture’; it engages specific objects, materials, and their properties, all of which are capable of accommodating more than one meaning.

Kreolite converges around the importance of particular objects and things that are treated as fixed: trees, houses, and books among them. Trees and plants are valued for their growth and re-growth, and objects derived from wood are considered to partake of this capacity for regeneration. Insofar as objects are fixed, this means that the reproduction of traditional forms, and of the form of the nation, can be presented by the state as a ‘natural’ consequence of material regeneration. ‘Creole values’ are likewise a product of this tendency towards regeneration that exists at a material – and not merely ideational – level.

However, the state’s version of *kreolite* is troubled by the irregular and spontaneous nature of regeneration and the variety of divergent forms that it may

produce; objects and materials are unruly, accommodating divergence, the diasporic and the transnational. And this creolizing tendency of materials, in turn, troubles the division between things and people. Within a post-slave context still bearing the mark of the plantation (at a material, as well as ideational, level), this distinction may sometimes be necessary but can never be innocent.

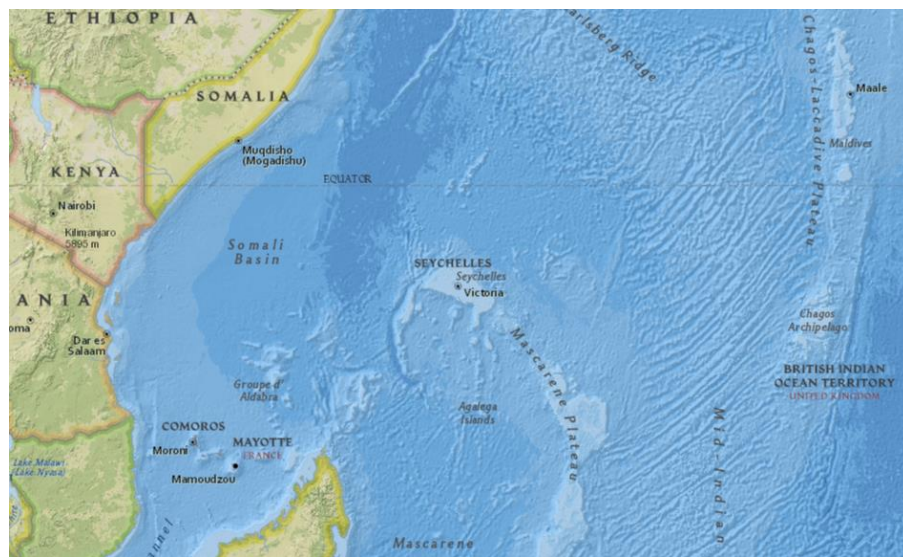


Figure 1. The Seychelles islands in relation to Africa (adapted from Google Maps by Mairi O'Gorman).

The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelagic state in the Indian Ocean comprised of 115 islands. The population numbers approximately 97,000 people, most of whom live on the main island of Mahé, and the neighbouring Inner Islands of Praslin and La Digue. The archipelago was uninhabited until the French claimed possession in 1771, and in 1814 (under the Treaty of Paris) passed to British control. From this period through to the mid-20th century, the economic and social life of the islands was constructed entirely around the plantation. Consequently, the population claim descent from African, Asian and European antecedents, and the most commonly spoken language is *Kreol Seselwa*, which derives from French and African sources. Seychellois do not only speak Kreol, but consider themselves to be Creole people. As I will explain in subsequent sections, in the region this suggests not only racial mixing but the presence of African ancestry, and the ongoing legacy of the plantation.

The smallness of the islands and their relative remoteness, as well as their precarious status as a colony, meant that there was always a high level of migration into, out of, and between islands. In the 20th century, this mobility was accelerated by political changes: the adoption of parliamentary democracy and the movement towards independence from Britain; the moment of independence in 1976; the *coup d'état*, led by the socialist party, that took place in 1977 and ushered in a one-party state; and the return to multipartyism in 1992; the reliance on tourism as the centre of the national economy as the plantations collapsed and disappeared. These processes created Seychellois diasporas of varying cohesiveness in East Africa, Britain, Australia, Canada, and other countries. The possibility of working or studying abroad became available to Seychellois, and was often economically necessary. Meanwhile, life in Seychelles itself became increasingly transnational, shaped by far more immediate connections with other places (at a national and a personal level) than had hitherto been possible.

The growth of a national consciousness in Seychelles – conceptualised sometimes as European, at other times as African, and often against the perceived Asianness of other Indian Ocean nations – meant a growing state fixation on the idea of ‘culture.’ In the wake of Independence and the coup, this was an economic process as well as an imaginative one. It was partly internally-driven – a question of what constituted the national ‘self’ in ‘self-determination’ – and partly driven by outside forces – since, after all, it was a question for many postcolonial nations throughout the Cold War and structural adjustment periods. The question itself went beyond Seychelles. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s anthropologists were reappraising their disciplinary relationship to the concept of ‘culture’ (Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1973), while UNESCO developed the notion of culture as something that required protection in the World Heritage Convention of 1972 (Ahmad 2006:295). These debates and definitions have, as I will make clear, some bearing on the question for Seychellois.

This concept of Seychellois culture, developed throughout the latter half of the 20th century, drew on older ideas of the islands’ distinctiveness in the region, and continues to be adapted in response to global heritage discourses, political factors, and trends in tourism and national branding. However, it has remained stable in its emphasis on the Afro-Creole experience, and the values and objects purported to be central to this. Indeed, it has been characterised by an insistence on *reviving* exact forms rather than salvaging them.

The production and reproduction of Creole values is treated, like the regeneration of plants, as a natural process. In the immediate post-coup period (spanning the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s), young Seychellois were characterised as “seeds” of the socialist project (Henderson 1982:236), ushered into an artificial form of village life that revolved around life in the forest, cultivating plants, chopping and carving wood, and

making drums from branches. Recent state projects like *Renesans Sosyal* follow on from older attempts to revive Creole values via ‘traditional’ forms of art, music, and sociality. Through the language of renaissance and resurgence, these attempts draw on an arboreal idiom of family trees, African roots, and dispersal that is both common to nationalist projects in general (Malkki 1992:27) and, through the specific material properties of the plants involved, particular to Seychelles.

In Seychelles, arborescent imagery draws its character from the history of the islands. This means that it is informed by the plantation as an *institution*, and by plantation as a *process*. The plantation as an institution relied on an idea of Africans as close to nature, in a state of cultural infancy. It retrenched this association spatially and materially, reshaping the landscape and ordering racial identities through material culture (McKittrick 2013:8). In the Indian Ocean, an association between African diaspora and nature or wildness has persisted into the present day, often as a consequence of the political dominance of other ethnic groups and the concomitant spatial, economic and political marginalization of Afro-Creoles (Boswell 2006). In Seychelles, the majority of the population is Afro-Creole and the *coup d'état* installed a government whose agenda was overtly Afro-Creole; the association was therefore revalued positively. An arboreal nationalist logic was, in Seychelles, constructed on the basis of an older “plantation logic” (McKittrick 2013:11).

But the metaphorical underpinnings of being Afro-Creole are in the *process* of plantation, and the idea of the African diaspora as “planted” (Wynter 1971:95). Seychellois Afro-Creoles are figured as seeds and transplants that, whilst originating elsewhere (in Africa, Europe, Asia, or as a hybrid), were established and cultivated in Seychelles. Through

this, a mixed identity becomes rooted in the islands and the violence of slavery and the plantation is subsumed by the idea of natural growth and resurgence.

Seychellois who settle abroad are consequently a problematic category within a model that treats movement and dispersal as a distant historical phenomenon – despite the fact that out-migration is common. State *kreolite* is riddled with internal tensions and contradictions. It depends on heritage and culture workers who have often been educated or employed outside Seychelles, or maintain active transnational connections, who nonetheless consciously work to reproduce this form of *kreolite* as closely as possible. Likewise, artists, craftspeople and historians have their own conceptualisations of *kreolite* that may run counter to the state's version; their own transnational lives often undermine the nativist 'rooting' of Creole identity. Seychellois in London value being Creole highly, and participate in pan-Creole events and spaces alongside other black diasporas, but in ways that may oppose or resist the state's version.

Within this mass of contradictions, objects and materials become an anchoring taproot for *kreolite*, ostensibly providing evidence of an acceptable version of history. Both the history of plantation-as-institution and the logic of plantation-as-process permeate the objects and materials valued as especially Creole. Among these are the wooden *lakaz Kreol* (traditional Creole house) and its associated artefacts; medicinal plants and herbal remedies; the coconut palm; drums and instruments associated with traditional genres. Those who work with such objects and materials are cognisant of producing and reproducing the plantation, as well as the available possibilities for staging or concealing its violence.

The objects themselves embody regenerative potential through their material qualities. Even inert objects made of wood or skin or plant matter are considered to retain

a frisson of life absent from plastic or metal, and this lively quality renders them healthy or healing where they encounter human bodies. The mutability of objects makes them useful to the state, as they can be reproduced in various permutations and at various scales, and yet retain their Creoleness in a way that is recognised by Seychellois and outsiders alike.

The importance of objects and materials exists alongside pressure to define a de-materialised *kreolite*: Creoleness as a quality, part of a *process* of creolization that can be generalised to include the rest of the modern world. This tendency towards de-materialisation arises from a variety of sources. Discourses originating beyond Seychelles and its diaspora – in heritage preservation, the art world and academia – are preoccupied with relationality and abstraction. UNESCO has been (since the 1990s) increasingly concerned with aspects of culture – previously designated “folklore” (Bortolotto 2007:21) – that do not take the form of objects or monuments, but which exist in the skills and knowledge of heritage “transmitters” and require subtler methods of preservation and dissemination than can be encapsulated within a traditional museum (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:53). Movements in modern art, whilst engaging with materiality as a philosophical question, have (since the 1960s) produced “unobjects” (Burnham 1968:30), time-based events and installations. Meanwhile, anthropologists and other social scientists have throughout the 20th century questioned the idea of “cultures” and “societies” as static and bounded (object-like) and have proposed more dynamic concepts that account for duration and change. In relation to creolization specifically, this scepticism of categories and objects has taken the form of the idea that, if being Creole is a question of mixing, movement, and boundary-dissolution, we are “all being creolised” (Hannerz 1987:57). These all represent shifts from “an object-oriented to a systems-oriented culture”, as Jack Burnham has argued in reference to Western art. “Here change emanates, not from things, but from the way things are done” (1968:30).

Seychellois working in artistic or heritage fields experience pressure to conceptualise an abstract idea of *kreolite*, but this is not to say that the question of materiality has no salience beyond academic discourse. Seychelles – like other post-colonial, Afro-diasporic contexts (Miller 1994:291-292) – has its own dualist material philosophy. The idea of being Creole, as a claim about the material world, lends itself to an abstracted idea of the material and speculation about its ultimate limits. In Seychelles, immaterial things and beings belong firmly to the world of the malign, the occult, and life after death. They are regarded with suspicion but also figured as a necessary part of social life. Approaching *kreolite* or ‘Seychellois culture’ as an animating quality of objects downplays their unruliness within *kreolite*. Objects can in fact reveal hidden violence and unspoken secrets, whether those of the nation, the state, families or individuals.

The next section will provide an overview of the relevant literature on creolization, followed by an overview of literature on material culture. Finally, I will propose the concept of ‘intimacy’ as a way to think through both issues in relation to transnational Seychellois *kreolite*. In roughly mapping these bodies of literature, I plot the trajectory of persistent questions: who is a person? What is property? And what is the proper relationship between the two?

Maps and traces

Créolité

In order to argue that the term ‘Creole’ is a claim about the nature of the material world, it is necessary to outline what the word has meant historically, to indicate its scope, and to specify what it means to Seychellois at the present historical moment. In this section (and throughout the thesis) I will use the terms Creole and *créolité* to refer to the broader

context of global and transnational Creole identities; *kreolite* is used to refer to the Indian Ocean variant that is salient in Seychelles (and is sometimes distinguished, within this, as the state version).

‘Creole’ usually refers to an identity that is mixed and hybrid, often with explicit reference to language and implicit reference to race. To treat the term as narrowly linguistic, referring only to the way that people in culturally mixed societies use language, is to ignore the “language ideology” (Rosa and Burdick 2016) that links linguistic practices to “the people who characteristically use them” (Wortham 2008:43). *Créolité* is perhaps best approached from a “raciolinguistic perspective” that treats race and language as co-naturalised (Rosa and Flores 2017). From this perspective, Creole people are not the product of innocuous “culture contact” (Hannerz 1987:551) visible through the mixture of language and cultural expressions, but are figured as *racially* mixed in a way that enfolds colonial domination and violence. Differing across national contexts, depending on their history of capitalist production, indenture and imported labour (Hintzen 2002:108), the function of the category ‘Creole’ has been one of intermediacy and relationality – a mediation of the space between colonised and coloniser (Allen 2002:50). It is not contact alone but the sustained and continuous nature of that contact (Trouillot 1992:22, 25) – as well as its intimacy and violence – that produces such a category of person. As a consequence of these histories, Creole people are treated as quintessentially modern – not simply a kind of person, but a *new* kind of person.

*

Early use of the term ‘Creole’ arose from the taxonomic racial hierarchies of the Enlightenment. Racial knowledge of the time (upon which modern conceptions of race are premised) emphasised the impact of climate, landscape and the physical environment upon

the growth and development of living creatures (Allen 2002:52). Underlying this was a chain of being predicated on mastery of nature, in which Europeans were figured as more advanced than other races, who were subordinated to them just as animals and plants were. At its simplest, the term 'Creole' denoted a thing or a person born in the Old World but raised in the New (Mintz and Price 1985:6); a transplant, produced by one environment but formed by another, different one.

This process of transplantation was never considered a neutral one. The emphasis on mastery within the colonial chain of being was the basis for hierarchy, but it was also characterised by proximity – degrees of closeness to either nature or culture. This is most clearly visible the idea, circulated widely in the 18th century, that all other races were products of the “degeneration” of an original white race (Blumenbach 1865 [1775]:110), due to the influence of the environment and, in particular, heat upon moral character (Herder 1803:318). Being Creole, then, was not a simple matter of colonial distance from the metropole, but also implied the possibility of moral and biological transformation as Europeans came into contact with something else. Such a transformation could be effected not only by the influence of climate, but through physical and sexual contact between races and categories of person. Though sex and race were configured differently across colonial societies, they were underwritten by notions of profound difference, and therefore intersected in ways that were both subtly and overtly violent (Vergès 1999:9). Such contact produced a range of intermediate classes between coloniser and colonised – half-caste, mulatto, *métis* – some of which were valued positively through discourses of hybrid “vigour” (Young 2005:135, 191). 'Creole' was folded into this vocabulary, acquiring connotations of racial mixing and *métissage* (Palmié 2006:438). It became a “mechanism through which colonial discourses of difference [...] were accommodated” (Hintzen 2002:92).

As such, it referred to a variety of hybrid identities throughout 17th, 18th and 19th century colonial societies, sometimes as a way of describing mixing between indigenous people and settlers, and frequently also indicating the presence of another racialized group: enslaved Africans. Africa occupied a special place within colonial racial knowledge. The continent itself was considered resource rich, sublime and abundant (Adams and McShane 1996); according to the logic by which geography gave rise to racial characteristics, this abundance had influenced the development of Africans as inferior and uncivilised (Mudimbe 1988:26). Africa was the “land of childhood [...] lying beyond the day of self-conscious history”; Africans were thus “wild and untamed,” attuned to nature but incapable of mastering it (Hegel 2001:109, 111). This characterisation was the premise for the circulation of enslaved Africans as chattel, and the colonisation of Africa by Europeans, bringing Africans and Europeans into a hitherto-impossible proximity.

In the Caribbean, this proximity and these relationships were enmeshed with the “total economic institution” of the plantation (Beckford 1972:55). The deliberate fracturing of kinship units, ethnic and linguistic groups (purportedly demanded by the economics of plantation work) left Afro-Caribbeans with a memory of Africa and a sense of continuity complicated by displacement and slavery (Mintz and Price 1976:28-9). Sexual contact of various kinds created a mixed class of people, with both African and European (and potentially also indigenous and Asian) ancestry. The character of creolization was not uniform: in Jamaica, though the majority of the population (being racially and linguistically mixed) might be understood to be Creole, the term itself referred to the white plantocracy. Across the Caribbean, ‘Creole’ represented both African ancestry and an appeal to whiteness (Hintzen 2002:98).

Despite the deliberate suppression of specific African ethnic languages, practices and knowledge, enslaved Africans cultivated forms of personhood that could survive the experience of violent displacement. Creolization was in part a process through which European cultural forms were infused with a variety of African values and experiences. Grammatical structures, words, and other features of African languages became enmeshed with French, English, Spanish and Dutch (Chaudenson 2002:14-6). Prohibited religious practices, among them ones that had drums and rhythm as a central principle, were incorporated into the forms of Christianity imposed upon the enslaved. They travelled beyond this, into popular music and dance forms (Waterman 1999). Even the reproduction of 'European' respectability, not only in the form of bodily dispositions but also material culture, could be tipped by the enslaved and their descendants into burlesque and farce (Mbembe 1992:4). Everyday forms of resistance were utilised alongside violent resistance to slavery, through both *grand* and *petit marronage* – the enslaved sometimes revolted, killed their masters, or fled to establish hidden forest settlements (Fellows and Delle 2015). All these elements combined to produce a distinctive black diasporic culture in opposition to the dominant culture of white Europeans, and the sense of defiance, resilience and resourcefulness engendered by this remains a central feature of Afro-Creole personhood.

During the period of decolonization in the mid-20th century, Caribbean writers, artists and scholars were cognisant of being implicated in African struggles for independence through shared blackness and shared history. There was no simple resolution to the duality that had been wrought by colonialism; Derek Walcott, commenting on the Mau Mau uprisings in Kenya, as a black poet of mixed heritage in St Lucia, asked, "How can I face such slaughter and be cool?/ How can I turn from Africa and live?" (Walcott 1986:18). Though this question was articulated as an individual one, a generation of Afro-Caribbeans had begun to engage with Africa through *Nègritude* and

other attempts to reclaim African art-forms, modes of sociality and philosophies.

Throughout the 20th century, black artists and scholars aimed to restore creative legitimacy to African storytelling and dance, insisting on the centrality of 'rhythmical images' to African art, dethroning reason as the governing principle of culture (Senghor 1974:270). But this reclamation was not straightforward; it involved a tacit acceptance of African culture as poetic rather than reasonable; emotional rather than intellectual (Fanon 2008 (1967):129). Caribbean *créolité*, like other forms of black and mixed identity derived from distance from Africa (Hintzen 2002:93), was a connection to blackness, African-ness, and self-image marked by "double-consciousness" (Du Bois 2015:9). Creoleness can therefore be read as a process of contention (Bolland 2002:38) in the same way that the history of blackness is partly a history of negation (Mbembe 1992:34).

Creolization in the Indian Ocean was rooted in a history of slavery, indenture, and decolonization similar to that of the Atlantic world, but the outcomes of these processes were different. Though the plantation was the driver of demographic change, movements of people were influenced by the Asian and Arab history of the Indian Ocean, which predated European colonization and meant that South and East Asian merchant families had settled in wide-ranging networks across the region (Carter 1995; Carter and Kwong 2009). After the abolition of slavery in Seychelles in 1835, enslaved Africans were replaced in many parts of the Indian Ocean by South Asian 'coolie' labourers (nominally freer, though subject to coercive forces other than physical violence). Patterns of marriage and inheritance were mixed, perhaps due to economic factors. The collapse of the cotton markets (a result of American competition) affected not only racial but also class hierarchies, made social life less obviously stratified than in parts of the Caribbean. In some places, those who identified as African (or were categorised as such by others) became a numerical minority, as well as being politically marginalised.

Consequently, 'Creole' in the Indian Ocean is not reducible to a claim to whiteness, nor even to a claim to blackness inflected by 'European' antecedents. Eriksen has argued that in Mauritius it is a pluralist term that unites Mauritians across ethnic backgrounds, despite community particularities that persist (Eriksen 1998:168-9). Specific ethnicities are context-dependent (ibid. 18), re-enshrined through the experience of difference; in contrast Mauritian *kreolite* is open-ended and flexible (ibid. 14), common to Mauritians across difference. A significant component of this common identity is common language. This pluralist definition has been widely applied across the Indian Ocean, and accounts for interactions within everyday life. It is also, through its positive valuation of the flexibility and accommodating qualities of the 'Creole' category, easily absorbed into nationalist discourses that may obscure power relations within these interactions. Across the Indian Ocean, such discourses make an appeal to Creole languages as a model for social organization, but they do so in a particular and limited way. Where mixed identities, histories and languages are complex and unruly, states seek to regulate and formalise them. Where the actual use of Creole languages may remain contentious, language as a metaphor appears to dictate appropriate forms of citizenship and relations between citizens.

Apart from this general regional use of the term, 'Creole' is still understood in many Indian Ocean contexts to mean 'Afro-Creole.' In Mauritius, this refers to the descendants of slaves brought through the entrepôt of Madagascar (Vaughan 2005), who are nowadays disproportionately afflicted by economic hardship, stereotyped as lazy and sensuous, and linked with nature in the national imaginary (Boswell 2006:201). The forcibly displaced Chagos Islanders, disadvantaged even within the Mauritian Afro-Creole minority, are perhaps the most obvious example of the modern-day consequences of historical marginalisation (Jeffery 2013). If Africanness is underplayed in state and nationalist

discourses, it is perhaps due to the necessity of obscuring such persistent inequalities. Additionally, however appealing the exoticism of mixed race identities may be to tourists, the psychological legacy of the plantation is as complex in the Indian Ocean World as in the Atlantic. Vergès has argued that in La Réunion, which chose to remain a *department* of France rather than decolonise, there is a residual symbolic denial of sexual encounters between white masters and black female slaves (Vergès 1999:43).

However, there are ways of valuing Creole and African identity that subvert or circumnavigate state multiculturalism. Indian Ocean *kreolite* often makes reference to other African diasporas rather than to Africa itself (Jeffery 2010a:428), regardless of actual geographical proximity to the African continent. Through music, dance and pop culture, Indian Ocean Creoles are able to align themselves with a larger black diaspora and articulate the fact of displacement. As in the Caribbean, Creoleness is conflated with a knack for music, the arts, and anything centred on the body; as in the Caribbean, the positively-valued Creole *joie de vivre* has its negative implications of childishness; atemporality and ignorance of time; animality and the absence of reason. An association between Afro-Creoles and nature is strong in Mauritius, where the concealed habitations of runaway African slaves (Vaughan 2005:14) are presented for tourist consumption as maroon villages (Boswell 2005). As in the Caribbean, the maroon slave as a figure condenses ideas of masculinity, strength, violence, carelessness and closeness to nature that are understood to be quintessentially Creole (Vergès 1999:43). The valorisation of such figures is nonetheless constrained by the role that this form of masculinity has played in regional politics as part of Socialist and republican iconography.

In other parts of the Indian Ocean, these qualities are integrated into what is fundamentally a minority identity, but Seychelles is distinct in that most of the population

identify as Afro-Creole (and do so in defiant opposition to perceived Mauritian 'Indianness'). These qualities are therefore not only part of colonial othering, but of self-image. They not only represent the legacy of the plantation, but an image deliberately deployed by the state as part of an idea of national liberation and self-determination.

*

Before further specifying what 'Creole' means for Seychellois, it is necessary to interrogate the way that the literature of creolization depends on the conceptual generalisability of the category. This might, paradoxically, have its roots in the personal and intimate, as when Vergès has defined creolization as

the experience of being a foreigner, hence about radically questioning the relations among roots, territory, and identity. It is the territory of language, rather than blood. Creolization allows a theory of the subject that is not contained within the limits of imperial and national sovereignty. It challenges the "truth" of identity (Vergès 2010:149).

Here, being Creole goes beyond the merely historical and material, to become illustrative of a general existential truth. The personal experience of those who identify as Creole is perhaps symptomatic, rather than constitutive, of this illustrative quality. Creolization is treated (academically and popularly) as emergent and ongoing, an aspect of the modern condition rather than a consequence of racial categorisation, with the explanation that modernity is characterised by an increase in the frequency and intensity of contact between different kinds of people. If "creole cultures like creole languages are those which draw in some way on two or more historical sources, often originally widely different" (Hannerz 1987:552), it follows logically that in a globalized, transnational world "we are all being creolised" (ibid. 557).

This issue is foremost one of politics and power. When this kind of general principle is abstracted from differences inscribed on the body (through ideas of race) and subsequently perpetuated, often violently, through economic and material conditions, it has the effect of obscuring how Creole personhood is produced (Palmié 2006a:448). If to be Creole is to be a foreigner, a stranger, this move to render everyone Creole is a kind of “stranger fetishism” which “cuts ‘the stranger’ off from the histories of its determination” (Ahmed 2013:5, italics in original). The term ‘Creole’ makes a claim about the material that does not narrowly concern Creole people, but speaks of an entire chain of being. This chain of being is conceptualised in relation to a material inheritance: wealth, power and resources that are transmitted through generations along stratified lines, producing unequal outcomes (Mbembe 2017:35). During the Enlightenment, the natural basis of these inequalities was understood to be self-explanatory, requiring no further justification beyond the influence of climate, environment and Providence; in the present day, the ‘natural’ basis of inequality has been submerged in genetics (ibid. 21). In fact, the Creole person cannot be taken for granted any more than the stranger can; neither are objective realities, and both call the certainty of genetics, race and nation into question. Both have been produced by histories of marginalisation, deliberately rendered monstrousness. To generalise this condition to include the powerful (whether at a global, national or local scale) is neither perverse nor coincidental, but does the active work of obscuring inequality and its historical production.

As well as being a question of power, it also represents shift in focus from the materiality of being Creole to the dematerialized, processual dimensions of creolization, and both tendencies are evident in Seychellois *kreolite*. State and non-state actors in Seychelles, and in the diaspora, are preoccupied with what it means to be Creole both in a general sense and within a specific national context. Seychellois *kreolite* is predicated on

the intimacy of relatedness and racial inheritance (see Chapter 1, Island-Born) but finds expression through material culture designated *tradisyon* (tradition) and *leritaz* (heritage). This material culture encompasses both ‘monumental’ sites (Geismar 2015:74) associated with the plantocratic elite, and artefacts associated with everyday ‘traditional life.’ More recent interventions in world heritage have emphasised a need to preserve less durable objects and forms, as well as the knowledge involved in their creation and transmission (Bortolotto 2007:27). This is framed as a difference between “tangible” (formerly monumental, durable forms of cultural expression) and “intangible” (formerly folklore, relatively ephemeral forms) cultural heritage. Thinking through what it means for *kreolite* to be intangible as well as tangible necessitates an examination of the history of the object: a history that intersects with that of the Creole subject.

Creole objects (material and immaterial)

Before interrogating the significance of material culture and heritage in Seychelles, this section will give a sense of the intellectual trajectory of the theorisation of objects and materiality. This history will be confined to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought, not because these ideas have universal relevance, but because they were informed by the institution of the plantation. This means both that processes in Seychelles, where the “total economic institution” (Beckford 1972:55) of the plantation was formative, were influenced by the development of ideas about the distinction between things and people. It also means that Seychelles, like other plantation contexts, was implicated in this intellectual history as it was lived in reality.

I have argued so far that the colonial hierarchy was underwritten by the notion of mastery, and that this functioned in terms of ideas of proximity – degrees of closeness to

either nature or culture – that were understood as material, racial difference. Here I will interrogate how this understanding of the material world was also realised in the idea of the object as a means of mediating between the material and the immaterial. In the Western philosophical tradition, the object implies a level of both distance and intimacy, and constructs (in opposition) the idea of an observer (Hegel 1979 [1807]:52) who is conceptualised as a person, where the object is not, and may even exert rights of ownership over the object. Ownership is thereby incorporated into an idea of personhood that has become central to the project of modernity.

The way that meaning is constituted by objects has formed the basis for understanding how cultures represent themselves via objects, and for proposing an idea of universal human cultural heritage. Engagements with culture by anthropologists, archaeologists and heritage workers, have been underwritten by a dematerialising tendency that locates meaning between objects and persons, rather than within them. Yet it is important not only that this tendency is the product of a particular history, but that it is not the only way of conceptualising relationships between people and things; while many alternative frameworks are possible, this section will focus on the phenomenological and material turns in social science as having utility within the context of Seychellois *kreolite*. For those in Seychelles who work with ‘cultural’ objects – whether heritage practitioners, artists, artisans, or consumers – it is precisely the material qualities of objects that are significant.

*

The European discovery of antiquities from the Classical period not only contributed to an idea of ‘Western civilization,’ but also to an understanding that ‘culture’ was made up of things. This idea has been pervasive, throughout anthropological engagement with the

material as well as in other theorisations of culture, and (as I will argue below) moves towards more processual definitions have failed to de-centre an underlying assumption about the interaction between meaning and matter.

The Enlightenment formulation of race described in the preceding section was developed in order to explain and naturalise differences *between* cultures. At the same time, Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers were theorising the modern nation-state in terms of what was shared *within* a given group of people, and this too was explicable via 'culture.' From the Renaissance onward, a sense of the Greek and Roman past as part of the inheritance of modern European states had begun to take root (Lowenthal 2015:153). The rise of nation-states as entities throughout the 18th and 19th centuries led ancient artefacts to assume greater importance, and "antiquities gained credence as historical witnesses more reliable and more compelling than documents" (Lowenthal 2005:83). In the 19th century, early attempts were made to protect artefacts as primarily cultural, expressive objects; things that contained an inner essence of their producers and were therefore part of the inheritance of the descendants of these producers (Geismar 2015:74). The imperial expansion that "projected" Westernness into the world (Glissant 1997:56) also projected these ideas into other contexts.

This link between culture and material things was forged at a time of unprecedented European economic expansion, during the 18th and 19th centuries (Palmié 2006b:855), at a point when the very idea of "the economic" became separated from other dimensions of social life (Mitchell 1998:171; Polanyi 2001 [1944]). The plantation was a site in which this separation was realised spatially through divisions of labour and leisure, worship and commerce (McKittrick 2013:6), but it also realised a more profound separation. The institution of chattel slavery relied on and informed a Cartesian division

between mind and body. As Palmié has argued, “the notion of the body as an integral, objective locus of individualized identity, self-control, and personhood... is not an idea that René Descartes merely dreamed up in a seventeenth-century German boarding house” (Palmié 2006b:855). Rather, this was the product of an economic context in which new forms of commodification and the circulation of things were made possible by the appropriation of non-Western land and labour. Just as inheritance was part of the continuity of ‘culture,’ the legal right to own and dispose of things became embedded in the very definition of personhood (Radin 1982). The objectification of black bodies in particular (Mbembe 2017:18; Palmié 2006b:854) was instrumental in theorising a distinction between the immaterial and the material that became enshrined in various other binaries (mind/body, subject/object, master/slave).

These binary philosophical distinctions have been widely critiqued by those who work with ‘culture,’ not least because they continually resurface as theoretical problems. Investigating culture in the Western tradition was based on an initial impulse (in the 18th and 19th centuries) towards the collection of objects, people, and ethnographic examples with the purpose of illustrating general truths about humankind (Gruber 1970:1290). It was, furthermore, underwritten by the notion that cultural difference was disappearing in the face of industrial and technological ‘advancement’ and that cataloguing ‘tradition’ represented an attempt to ‘salvage’ it (ibid. 1296). While these suppositions have been challenged many times, they have an ongoing impact on how theorists of material culture conceptualise both culture and the material. An emphasis on the exchange of material objects has tended to locate meaning around things rather than in them; this tendency to separate meaning from the material has resulted in difficulty theorising actual relationships between the two, as well as in justifying the collection and preservation of objects. In the following paragraphs, I sketch this not as an ordered history but as a broad trajectory.

Anthropological enquiry has, from the early days of the discipline, thought through objects as part of processes of exchange and circulation, and therefore constitutive of social structure (Malinowski 2013; Mauss 2002). Late 19th and early 20th century scholars were often actively engaged in the process of accumulating culturally expressive artefacts. At the same time, they were critical of the separation of 'the economic' from other aspects of social life within industrial societies in a way that informed analyses of other worldviews. Mauss's characterisation of gift-giving as the transmission of part of the giver across distances or milieus, as well as a question of the gift's innate "spirit" (2002:15) demonstrated continuities between exchange processes within industrial societies and ones in more "total," undifferentiated systems (ibid. 43). In such systems

Souls are mixed with things; things with souls. Lives are mingled together, and this is how, among persons and things so intermingled, each emerges from their own sphere and mixes together. This is precisely what contract and exchange are (Mauss 2002:25-6).

After Mauss (and Marx), anthropologists have given fuller ethnographic and historical accounts of exchange within industrial societies and in the context of mass production. They have described handmade objects as marked by the conditions of their production, and therefore not fully alienated (Carrier 1992:543); and commodities as alienable or alienated, conveying meaning only insofar as it is externally imputed to them (Kopytoff 1986:67). Economic anthropology has not primarily attempted to argue for or against an ontological distinction between people and things, or to explain how meaning inheres in objects beyond their incorporation within social systems. Instead, accounts of exchange have typically been concerned with more abstract questions: of value creation through social action (Munn 1992:8; Robbins 2009) of hierarchy as constituting, and being constituted by, value (Dumont 1982). Such accounts are concerned with the interaction between human intention and materiality, but take for granted that this interaction should

be read semiotically, preserving a gap between ‘meaning’ and ‘thing.’ This emphasis on the processual dimensions of exchange and value is visible both within the earlier Malinowskian injunction to “follow the thing,” (Marcus 1995:106) and the late 20th century notion of “things” with “social lives” (Appadurai 1988); not only incorporated into human economic activities, but into human sociality (Miller 2008). Such approaches may playfully attribute limited forms of subjectivity (in the form of biography, or mobility) to objects, but nonetheless maintain a “bright ontological dividing line between things and people” (Palmié 2006b:853). Significantly, they do so through the invocation of a larger system of meaning or an emphasis on the processual aspects of the social.

The problem of *how* intention interacts with material things has re-emerged at various times in relation to the idea of the fetish. The concept of “fetishism” was developed within the early context of the discipline of anthropology, encompassing the religious (the apparent veneration of inanimate objects), the psychological (the attachment of sexual desire to inanimate objects) and the Marxian (the objectification of relations between persons so that they appear as relations between things). Phenomena described as fetishism have been treated as, at best, category errors; at worst, primitive. They demonstrate an ambivalent attitude on the part of subjects towards objects, which might either possess a personhood of their own or stand for the personhood of an absent other (Ellen 1988). Theoretically, the fetish has been deployed to account for both misplaced desire, and anxiety – emotions that, despite the apparently commonsensical nature of the distinction between person and thing, seem to readily attach themselves to objects (Ahmed 2010:44). The deviant, polluting nature of such attachments has seeped into the discussion itself. Daniel Miller has argued that discomfort with desire is at the root of anthropological failure to take relationships with objects seriously (Miller 2005; Miller 2010); David Graeber has contended that a focus on these objects, through a lens of consumption that vindicates

desire, fails to consider the role of labour in producing them (Graeber 2011:500-2). In relation to anxiety, fetishism has been less troubling. Via Marx's "commodity fetishism," Taussig (1977) understood occult beliefs about enchanted dollar bills to be a way of accounting for the logic of capitalist accumulation. Other postcolonial settings bring together fetishism-as-mystification of labour with fetishism-as-magic (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) in ways that anthropologists have understood as illustrating deep anxieties about modernity, capitalism and accumulation, articulated through existing moral economic ideas. However, these interventions construed the idea of objects moving by themselves, or of people who might in fact be objects, as requiring explanation and interpretation via social processes.

Treating fetishism as category confusion takes for granted that the distinction between categories – whether they be mind/body, subject/object, person/thing – is an obvious one. In fact, transatlantic slavery, relationships with human remains, and the questions raised by new biotechnologies (among other possible examples) all suggest that this division has never been a clean one (Palmié 2006b:873). If these divisions are read as relationships – and ones of profound proximity – agentic objects are not category errors; they are effects of the creation of categories. The fact that the discussion of these issues by material culture theorists has been so fraught suggests that relations between people and objects appear, even at the level of theory, to require regulation.

Underlying theoretical engagements with material culture was a tacit hylo-morphism – the presumption that human beings act upon inert matter in order to produce a change of form, resulting in the creation of objects (Ingold 2009:92). Hylo-morphism insists on the priority of human agency in a moral as well as chronological sense. This attitude has been disputed, not least by scholars who aim to take the occult and

the existence of non-human intentional actors ontologically seriously,² and thus to broaden the ways that the concept of agency can be applied via non-Western ontologies and cosmologies. But apart from this, it is worth considering the relatively weak explanatory power of hylomorphic and semiotic approaches, even in relation to the ‘Western’ collection of ‘expressive’ artefacts.

Art objects, which play with expressive possibilities, have been a special problem for material culture theorists working within a social science tradition that has tended to locate meaning primarily in social structures. For Bourdieu, social class was a major determinant of when and how people understood objects; he argued that in the context of art, a fixation on actual form, materials and texture belied an unfamiliarity with how meaning was ‘supposed’ to be read (Bourdieu 2013:xxvi, 34). Alfred Gell considered social agency to be perceptible (even in artefacts alien to the observer) via a process of “abduction” – an inference based on the presence of clues, as in the formulation “where there’s smoke there’s fire” (Gell 1998:13-4). Explanations of this sort are reliant on the idea that sociality enables human beings to parse the presence of intentionality. This has been controversial among theorists who deal directly with the way art and craft objects are made (Bunn 1999; Ingold 2007), as well as with the growth and construction of natural objects. Indeed, it is actively undermined by Western-centred modern art, which has for decades – via surrealism, found objects, Happenings, performance, and other types of “un-object” (Burnham 1968:30) – toyed with the imperfection of human readings of objects.

The gap between object and meaning has been engaged by phenomenological approaches that have refocused attention away from the (ultimately unknowable) object, onto the perceiving subject. Material objects, like immaterial ones, were conceptualised as

² Amazonian perspectivist literature (Vivieros De Castro 1998) and the literature of spirit possession (Boddy 1989; Lambek 1993) have both taken such an approach.

the product of a “standpoint” adopted by the mind of the observer (Husserl 1967 [1931]). Objects *became* objects in the encounter with the human observer (Heidegger 1971:177), even as they might lead an independent existence as “things” (ibid. 181). The notion of the private language of things has antecedents in both the playful literary tradition and the critiques of industrial society mentioned above (Benjamin 2004:64; Mauss 2002:160), but theories of material culture after the phenomenological turn have pivoted on a more serious redistribution of agency among collectives and assemblages of people and things. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “the pact” between persons and things, stemming from their co-existence as material entities (1968:146) is illustrative of this. Latour’s Actor Network Theory, in positioning objects as “actants” within networks of things and people, located agency in the network as a whole rather than any one point within it (Latour 2012:128). This has formed the basis for arguments that things are “subaltern members of the collective that have been silenced and ‘othered’ by the imperialist social and humanist discourses” which posit that “the subject, the social, the episteme, created the object[...] that everything is language, action, mind and human bodies” (Olsen 2003:100).

To summarise, I have discussed two intersecting trajectories in material culture studies: one that locates meaning in the social, rather than the material; another which re-centres the material as a means of problematizing the social. Here I would point out that there is something morally at stake in both trajectories; a negotiation of the boundaries of personhood that mirrors those surrounding the idea of *créolité*. This is a political question, and yet abstracted approaches to the material are frequently de-politicized. In the context of heritage, politics cannot be avoided. The shift towards processual approaches has led UNESCO to approach culture as a process of transmission (Bortolotto 2007:27) and a capacity for expression (Kurin 2004:67) shared by all human beings. Yet the fact that heritage bodies are concerned with collection, preservation, restoration and indexing

means that older Cartesian questions are never fully exorcised. Notions of the meaning conveyed by objects in the context of the nation-state, and a culture that is somehow expressed via things require an account of where this meaning resides, since it is evident that in the context of intangible cultural heritage, it is less important to preserve material manifestations than to “support the continuity of knowledge and skill” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:60). For heritage workers, this is a pragmatic question – it establishes which practices, bodies of knowledge and objects require preservation, as well as where the limits of the tangible are (ibid. 59; Kurin 2004:70).

One possible way of rethinking the agency of things outside the subject/object is via an emphasis on materials – not in the abstract sense of “materiality,” but through attention to their specific material properties (Ingold 2007:3). Close attention to the fluctuating properties of materials (ibid. 12), whether in the context of skilled human engagement with them (as in art, craft, and other processes of making), or in the context of natural processes, suggests that there is no clear dividing line between what is grown and what is made (Hallam and Ingold 2016). Human beings might themselves be considered, not only part of Latourian “assemblages” of material actants (Bennett 2009:23-4), but assemblages themselves. Human beings are “composed of various material parts (the minerality of our bones, or the metal of our blood, or the electricity of our neurons)” which are “lively and self-organizing” rather than directed by an immaterial mind (Bennett 2009:10). Intention, meaning and language do not disappear from this standpoint, but no longer have priority in constituting the lives of things. Such a shift need not remove the human altogether. A focus on materials has the benefit of accounting for the emotional charge attached to objects, not as the interaction of the immaterial with the material, but as the intersection of materials. Emotions are bodily; “bodies do not dwell in spaces that

are exterior but rather are shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling," so that both bodies and objects are preconditions for understanding (Ahmed 2006:9).

The materiality of modern state project of *kreolite* takes in everyday mass-produced commodities, art-objects, and heritage artefacts; objects from all of these categories are conceptualised as inherently Creole. This thesis discusses houses and their furnishings, photographs, paintings, books, clothing and other objects clearly produced by human agents and consequently central to ideas of Seychellois material culture. It also includes trees, plants and food products, which have been cultivated, shaped or processed by humans, but which occupy a far more ambivalent position in terms of whether they can be said to have been authored by human agents. Objects and things belonging to these categories are utilised as peculiarly Creole – representations of culture both within Seychelles (as active elements of social life) and in the wider global context (representing social life to outsiders). Their Creole nature is not only constituted by authorship – the fact that they are produced by Creole people – but is attributed by Seychellois to their material properties. Furthermore, these properties account for how objects may vary in form and condition, and yet remain essentially Creole. Cartesian-derived notions of materiality, which maintain a strict division between object and subject, struggle to accommodate this variation. Creole objects, like Creole subjects, are produced in negotiations and slippages between categories – variation is central to their hybridity, as well as to the ways in which they are political.

Creole intimacies

I have argued thus far that Creole persons and Creole objects exist at the point of contact between categories, and in this section will consider what contact entails via the concept of

intimacy. Rather than taking intimacy for granted, or making it a designation for affective and emotional life more generally, in this section I will draw on literature that spans several interrelated discussions within anthropology and social science in order to outline the different scales at which intimacy is operative and the way, concomitantly, that the idea of intimacy produces the idea of scale. It has been characterised as a vague term (Geschiere 2013:23) and used to theorise diverse examples across the economic sphere, the nation-state, and the occult. However, intimacy retains coherence through an emphasis on the internal, and the construction of the external in relation to this. It is a way of conceptualising forms of knowledge as well as possibilities for harm.

Threaded through apparently disparate contexts and literatures of intimacy is the idea of the house, which has become an idiom of intimacy unto itself. This is true within Western modernity, where it has become a way of figuring the nation-state. Similarly, within African epistemological traditions it has represented processes of understanding kinship, relatedness, politics and the potential for harm. In Seychelles, the house has outsized significance in a way that derives from both traditions, and yet which is recognisable as its own distinct configuration. As an analytic integral to this thesis, it brings together a variety of forms of intimacy, knowledge and harm.

★

Defining intimacy is complicated both by its apparently commonsense meaning, and by the positive valuation that is often attached to the concept. In the paragraphs that follow, I will argue that this positive valuation is partly a product of its being positioned against market logic, and the assumption that intimate relations are ones of generalized reciprocity. In fact, intimacy and exchange permeate each other in ways that are most evident in the social construction of the household as an economic and affective unit. This ideal of the

household is complicated and extended by both contemporary transnationalism and historical processes of colonial domination.

Perhaps the vagueness that clings to 'intimacy' stems from the fact that everyone feels they know something about it (Berlant 1998:282); as a concept, it makes an appeal to universality that conceals the way it has been deployed throughout modernity. 'Intimate,' derived from the Latin *intimāre*, "to bring within," and *intimus*, "inmost" (Skeat 1884:266) pertains to all that is "inmost; inward; intestine", "near; not kept at a distance", "familiar; closely acquainted" (Johnson 1877:651). It is therefore a spatial term that implies an inside, an outside, and a relationship between them. However, the idea of an "inmost self," in the context of post-Enlightenment liberalism, also contains an imperative towards self-knowledge (Foucault 1988; Oswin and Olund 2010:60). Intimacy also "entails a threshold for an other" who may enter into a privileged kind of relationship with the self (ibid. 61). The nature of this relationship between self and other, as one of familiarity, can also be understood as a kind of specialised knowledge (Zelizer 2005:14).

In academic usage, intimacy has often been valued positively in a way that confirms assumptions about social relations rather than challenging them (Geschiere 2013:23), a tendency that is most obvious in the notion that personal proximity and specialised knowledge are necessarily accompanied by trust. Trust, which accounts for how relationships are extended and maintained over time (Corsín Jiménez 2011:187), is a useful analytic for considering how "knowledge, responsibility and mutuality collapse into an identical social form" (ibid. 178), when they do in fact collapse in this way. But it seems intuitively important that trust – unless "degrees" of it (ibid. 14-15) encompass *mistrust* and the absence of trust – does not follow logically from knowledge any more than it does from proximity or kinship (Geschiere 2013:29).

If intimacy is valued positively, this is perhaps because social scientists have tended to position it against the logic of market exchange. Anthropologists have typically understood economic life as made up of spheres (Bohannan 1959; Douglas and Isherwood 2002:95; Kopytoff 1986:71) or moral and temporal orders (Bloch and Parry 1989:25), existing in greater or lesser proximity to processes associated with intimate life. Typically positions have polarised around market forces and intimacy either having a polluting quality where they come into contact (Kopytoff 1986:73) , or else collapsing into one another so that all intimate relationships are understood as types of exchange, kinds of labour, or forms of consumption (Zelizer 2000:825). This problematic relationship between the economic and intimate is understood as one of incommensurability between different ways of reckoning value (Zelizer 2005:23). The intimate sphere, where reciprocity is assumed to be generalized, is supposed to be free of overt calculation (Sahlins 2017:175-6). Conversely, within market-based calculations of value, trust and the existence of prior relationships may pollute the clarity of information necessary to make an accurate appraisal of risk (Corsín Jiménez 2011:186). The underlying root of this incommensurability is the presumption that affective relationships – except where they are turbulent (Graeber 2012:62) are free from the tension of keeping score (Geschiere 2013:30).

Nonetheless, it is apparent across a variety of ethnographic examples that the intimate and the economic are always in varying degrees of contact, and the household exists at this intersection. The word “economic” is itself derived from the Greek *oikos*, “house” (Hann 2011:1); “householding” has been understood, in historical terms, as a form of both production and of consumption of a particularly self-contained, self-sufficient kind (Polanyi 2001 [1944]:53). Within Western modernity, the household blends property and accumulation with love and marriage, standing at the centre of myriad “intimate transactions” – consumption, the earmarking of different forms of currency and credit for

different purposes, negotiations surrounding care and education (Zelizer 2005:4). Such negotiations do not take place harmoniously on the basis of generalized reciprocity, but involve the careful drawing of boundaries “between proper and improper uses of intimacy [...] because different sorts of intimacy vary in their moral qualities” (Zelizer 2005:18).

Where the household of Western economic thought is described as spatially anchored, contained and with a circumscribed number of inhabitants (each of whom has a clearly defined role) (Povinelli 2002:218), forming a private, domestic realm (Habermas 1991:152), the reality of the household frequently exceeds these boundaries. Quite apart from the fact that households may form nodes in large networks (Gudeman 2016:43), transnational migration reconfigures the boundaries of the house itself. Familial and intimate life crosses borders in ways that are not simply emotional and affective, but often concrete and material. Transnational migrants and their families circulate money, commodities, gifts and food that constitute acts of care (Abranches 2014; Singh 2006) across national borders. At the same time, via formal and informal associations and networks, “social remittances” are circulated: forms of knowledge, values, beliefs and conceptions of the good life (Levitt 1998). Migrants’ remittances “connect the personal and domestic experiences of globalisation with macro financial flows” (Singh, et al. 2012:475), but they also make clear that the separation between these domains is artificial. If care represented by money can be experienced as insufficient or in some way lacking (Gallo 2013:40), this is not simply a reflection of what money is but also of what care is. Intimacy is, at a variety of scales, haunted by a “potential failure to stabilize close-ness” (Berlant 1998:282).

Thinking through intimacy acknowledges that boundaries between the economic and the interpersonal, public and private, are a kind of fantasy (Berlant 1998:283). Despite

this transnational reality, the idea of the contained house has been reproduced through nationalisms and ethnonationalisms of various kinds (Herzfeld 2014:8, 126).³ Michael Herzfeld has argued that “conceptually the nation-state is constructed out of intimacy” (2005:13), but the idea of the nation as family does not imply a simple scaling up of the language of kinship. Rather, the “cultural intimacy” emerging from this idea of a national family – the construction of national “self-stereotypes,” good and bad, and “strategic essentialisms” that allow state and non-state actors to construct national homogeneity (ibid. 32) – is actually opposed to the intimacy of the family. The nation-state, in order to preserve its authority both within its borders and in the context of a global order, must occlude the “embarrassing fact that not all families are happy and harmonious” (ibid. 49).

The possibility of hidden violence is integral to intimacy, and familial unhappiness (even at the level of the nation) cannot be entirely suppressed. While “intimacy” is often treated as synonymous with care and sharing (Geschiere 2013:25), proximity, specialised knowledge, and the temporality of ongoing relationships create potential for harm. Intimacy is a continuum that “ranges from damaging to sustaining, from threatening to satisfying, from thin to thick” (Zelizer 2005:18). Harm is not the negation of intimacy; in fact, intimate violence is a particularly effective form of violence (Geschiere 2013:26). While in some academic contexts this suggestion has been met with shock (ibid. 26), both the Western psychological tradition and feminist scholars have long considered intimate relationships sites of violence (repressed or overt) and coercion (De Beauvoir 1989:443; Freud 1955 (1909)-a). Lynn Hunt has utilised the Freudian concept of the “family romance” as an analytic for narratives, art and literature of the French revolution, on the

³ While it lacks currency within academic writing, Roger Scruton’s coinage of the term *oikophobia* to describe progressive and left-wing discourse (1993) has become part of an increasingly mainstream right-wing discourse that grounds itself in a very particular reading of Greco-Roman political philosophy – Stoicism via Frank Miller’s *300*.

basis that both involve broader collective imaginings of patriarchal power (2013:8). Freud posited the existence of a developmental stage (purportedly common in neurotic boys) in which the child fantasises that their parents are imposters, in contrast to an imagined noble parentage (ibid. xiii). Hunt argued that in the French Revolution, the paternal figure of the King was violently displaced in favour, not of a nobler father, but of a fraternity of citizens (ibid. 70).

But each unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion; in the colonial world, this fantasy of power within the family often developed within the context of revolutionary and anticolonial struggle (Wilson 2014:132-134). Vergès, in exploring the limits of the national 'family' within colonialism, has argued that Réunionnais anticolonial sentiment eventually led to closer union with France, as citizens could neither fully reject the *patrie* nor assume full status as brothers (1999). This was due to their status as Creoles and *métis*, who, by their very existence, revealed the secret of racial mixing, illicit sex and force at the heart of the colonial conjugal home (ibid. 30). The violence of the colonial encounter helped to produce (Western) companionate romantic intimacy and the nuclear family as desirable and moral (Povinelli 2006:193), in contrast to alternative (non-Western) ways of organising kinship and sex. State technologies – overt and covert, legislative and archival – were deployed to maintain boundaries between settlers and natives, habitants and slaves, as a matter of moral, sexual and bodily hygiene (Stoler 2010:6). The ideal of the white married heterosexual couple took on special importance, becoming the fulcrum on which the household (and therefore economic and political life) turned (ibid. 2). Povinelli has argued that the companionate ideal developed within a tension (peculiar to liberalism) between the "autological subject" (the 'free' individual) and "genealogical society" (the constraint exercised by collective or 'traditional' social life) (2006:4). Intimate love in such a context

presents itself as a dissolution of obligations towards society, while constituting them anew; this is the source of the knowledge that “everyone” has of intimacy:

The truth of intimacy is that we know it happened because it happened to both of us, and the sign that it happened is that we have been transformed. Its happening made us; it made one out of two (note that it does not make one out of three or four or out of an unknown number) (ibid. 188).

If genealogical society policed the expansion of intimacy beyond these boundaries, it was also underpinned by a fear of incest amongst white colonists (Hunt 2013:34-5). “Incest,” in Édouard Glissant’s formulation, “changes the course of filiation, and vice versa” (1997:57). As filiation was the basis of genealogical forms of authority (ibid. 47) fear of incest articulated anxiety about the predatory nature of intimacy; a fear that the house could be too self-contained, too self-sufficient.

These colonial negotiations are to some extent predicated on Western economic notions of the household, and the idea of interlinked yet discrete spheres of existence. Yet the perverse quality of intimacy emerges within other traditions too, and the fear of the self-contained household expresses itself in different ways. Peter Geschiere has argued that witchcraft is the “dark side of kinship” (1997:11) and that, across ethnographic contexts, it arises from proximity as inherently dangerous. The African house is an idiom for organizing social life through kinship, descent and spatial proximity (Saul 1991:78); it is sometimes directly connected to the generative power of the womb (Abasi 1995:464-5).

This centrality means that it can accommodate both intimacy and harm of a profound nature (Geschiere 2013:26, 104). The house concretises ideas of kinship that are used to signify proximity more broadly (ibid. xix), and danger inheres in its position at the intersection of internal and external processes. Just as the house is being extended (through transnational migration and other forms of travel) so too is the remit of occult harm (ibid. 61). Witchcraft is a kind of unnatural consumption, a self-cannibalization

comparable to incest (Van Binsbergen 2001:41), and it is significant that it is not the opposite of intimacy or trust, but exists at the point where the familiar becomes the uncanny (Geschiere 2013:27).

While the house in Africa is frequently described in this way, as idiom or metaphor, I want to suggest that this conversion between the familiar and uncanny is made possible by the materiality of the house. Sara Ahmed has described the family as a “happy object”: “both an object (something that affects us, something we are directed toward” and something that circulates through objects (Ahmed 2010:45) that are ultimately gathered together in the house. Having considered the ways that Creole identities are produced by the contact between racial categories, and Creole objects by the contact between material and immaterial, I wish to designate this contact “intimacy” and to centre the house as a site where such contact occurs.

Map of the thesis

The first two chapters establish how the relational category ‘Creole’ forms a claim about place and an orientation towards objects (and materials). The institution of the plantation organised the material landscape of Seychelles in ways that structured ideas of racial difference, property, and (in relation to both of these concepts) inheritance. Cultural heritage discourses, art-objects and authorship, are understood in relation to this older idea of inheritance.

Chapter 1 starts from the idea of ‘roots,’ a way of conceptualising *kreolite* for both Seychellois in the islands and the diaspora. I begin from the plantation as establishing both plant and human life throughout the islands, suggesting that racial knowledge and knowledge of plants intersected and informed one another. The naturalistic metaphors

used to describe Seychelles as a nation (a feature shared with modern nationalisms more generally) draw on emic understandings of tree and plant growth. Insofar as arborescent imagery legitimates hierarchy within nation-states (Malkki 1992), in Seychelles and London this hierarchy must be understood as racialized. But ‘roots’ language can also be subversive – within the transnational black diaspora, the term signifies a shared imagined past and homeland. Participating in this transnational discourse, Seychellois in London make a claim to inclusion within a global black experience of displacement and mobility that values Africanness positively. In contrast, in Seychelles, ‘roots’ acknowledges Africa whilst keeping it at a distance, diminishing the history of slavery by suggesting that Seychellois emerged naturally from the islands. There is a tension between the fact that state *kreolite* attempts to revalue the African past, but does so through a genealogical and textual knowledge that minimises the material presence of this past. However, an alternative approach is taken through the work of (predominantly male) artists designated ‘archivists,’ who use traditional techniques, materials and forms to produce Creole objects.

Chapter 2 takes up the question of property and ownership in relation to the objects produced as part of *kreolite*, asking what it means to own or author something in Seychelles. I argue that intellectual property and cultural heritage in Seychelles must be understood in relation to land, which functions as a prototypical form of property. The discourse of ‘roots’ means that land can both be possessed by Seychellois and exert possession in relation to them, to varying degrees. People understand themselves to be ‘of’ specific locales as a consequence of the “black geography” of the plantation (McKittrick 2011:955) and its effects on both landscape and humans. The contrast between ownership and being owned is premised on the historical racialized dimensions of property that emerged from the plantation; on whiteness as a kind of “treasured property” (Harris 1993:1713), on the objectification of black bodies, and on racial difference as heritable.

The category 'Creole' makes claims to whiteness as well as blackness, to ownership as well as being owned, and has historically facilitated passing. In the present day, it mediates between an understanding of ownership that implies exclusive rights of disposal, and one that implies a moral imperative to circulate and share. I illustrate this distinction through interlocutors' accounts of buried pirate treasure and the rules governing how wealth found by chance should be circulated. These rules, like the logic of 'roots,' are linked to the generative power of land and soil. Ownership of land makes planting, production, and the creation of the house possible, but this generative potential is dependent on moral behaviour; specifically, in this instance, on recognising the obligation to create a proper Creole house.

In the succeeding two chapters, this generative power is realised through the traditional house. The house is figured both as a quintessential Creole object and as an idiom of *kreolite* and nationhood, positive valuations that stem from its form and appearance. A binary relationship between inside and outside is introduced, and I consider the ways that the inside of the house – precisely because of its intimate and affective qualities, and its material composition – contains sources of harm and possibilities for *disappearance*.

Chapter 3 begins from a distinct template for the house, and the specific forms and aesthetic choices that are considered identifiably Creole. These are derived in part from the plantation house and the chattel house, and are recognisable transnationally – Seychellois living rooms in the UK echo living rooms in Seychelles. The ideal house is wooden, partaking materially of the regenerative qualities of trees and plants. At the same time, houses are intensely mutable, due to the materials from which they are constructed, and also through their appeal as the subject of artworks across contexts, scale and media.

The house is not only lived in but represented by visual artists for both international and domestic consumers.

The house was also a way of structuring an ideal moral order. Morality was treated by my interlocutors as a hygienic binary between inside and outside, men and women; spheres that map onto the Caribbean division between “respectability” and “reputation” (Wilson 1969). The state utilises shared understanding of this division to portray Seychellois as a respectable family, concealing women’s work and men’s emasculation – undesirable behaviours that are treated as psychic remnants of the slave past.

However, the very material qualities that make the house comfortable can also produce discomfort. The homely, repressed, can reappear as the uncanny (Geschiere 2013:26) and in **Chapter 4** I begin to consider how unwanted things and people linger at the edges of the family property and bring misfortune. Despite the necessity of keeping the house properly clean, the removal of unwanted things caused anxiety and provoked criticism. Household waste, broken and unwanted objects were treated – by visual artists, the state, and others – as symptoms of ingratitude. An obsession with respectable appearances could become destructive, as it was integral to *kankan* (gossip). *Kankan* and the close observation of intimate others overlapped with state surveillance, and a fear of being ‘victimized’ or ‘disappeared’ should interpersonal disputes escalate. Furthermore, *kankan* was linked to *grigri* (witchcraft); though the two were not exact equivalents, both derived power from intimate knowledge and the fragile nature of trust. The dangers of intimacy were the dark side of the idea of the household as a unit of consumption: they were understood as products of insularity and self-cannibalization, or as an excess (of affection, affect or intention). They were also, in many ways, the dark side of *kreolite*. The house, as a primary site of intimacy, could facilitate numerous kinds of occult and mundane

harm not only through the intentions of those living in it, but in objects that bore the stamp of their past owners. In this respect, the intangible dimensions of Creole objects made them suspicious and potentially destructive.

In the final two chapters, I consider the extent to which distance from the house brings actors, objects and practices into closer proximity to the nation. Spaces outside the house – yards, streets, and hillside hideaways – are treated as dangerous due to their association with men, and yet nonetheless associated with Creole authenticity. For the state, integrating arcane practices in remote locales into *kreolite* has been an attempt to extend the boundaries of the nation-as-house, which occludes the power of actual domestic spaces. The two practices I explore, traditional medicine and *moutya* music, are considered medicinal for individual actors and potentially regenerative at the level of the nation. At the same time, these practices, and the materials and knowledge on which they rely, transform and shift when they are moved into new spaces in ways that potentially compromise their regenerative power.

Chapter 5 deals with the outdoor masculine realm that constitutes the other part of the inside-outside binary. The marginal relationship of young men and ‘mad’ men in relation to the house, and their presence in yards and on streets, was considered anti-social and dangerous through an association with substance abuse and violence. Yet, during and after the *koudeta*, this opposition to the house was refigured positively through the creation of the National Youth Service scheme, which deliberately removed a generation of young people from the domestic realm of respectability and placed them in militarised ‘villages’ in far-flung parts of the islands. Removal from the intimate life of the family brought these young people into closer intimacy with the nation – an intimacy that was particularly significant for male visual artists, for whom the association of these places with

earlier forms of rebellion and dissent – epitomised by the figure of the maroon (runaway slave) – was formative. I argue that forms of ‘exile,’ even from the Seychelles islands, do not place individuals beyond the purview of the nation-state, but actually constitute a more direct relation with it than haphazard processes of diaspora.

Chapter 6 considers these outside places in relation to their regenerative utility for individuals and the state. I consider traditional medicine and *moutya* music – practices that are not products of nation-building efforts, but have their own long histories that enfold movement, displacement slavery and violence. Both are considered healing practices in ways that derived from their marginality, secrecy, wildness, and existence at the intersection of the tangible and intangible. The state now seeks to incorporate them into a version of *kreolite* that both transforms them and codifies them, making them public. For traditional medicine, this means the translation of individual herbalists’ knowledge into more textualised forms. *Moutya*, a genre traditionally performed in secret, is increasingly moving into structured performance spaces, its form standardised. Medicine and *moutya* are both regenerative because they draw from earth as a substance, and play with boundaries that are salient in everyday life. Their capacity to facilitate the rebirth of Creole values, requiring formalisation and outside recognition, is at odds with regenerative power that is derived from secrecy.

Archipelago

The passages of the previous chapter open, to paraphrase Glissant, onto an archipelago (1997:84). This chapter sets out several histories of Seychelles and its diaspora across different times and places. These histories and the places they describe should be considered as interrelated, and as distinct, as a string of islands— an archipelago that spans the globe (Stratford 2011:121). The first history gives an overview of the process by which the islands became inhabited during the colonial period, and the class and race formations that occurred around the institution of the plantation. After the collapse of the plantation economy, the period of decolonisation, and the birth of Seychelles tourism, these older social formations remained salient. They contributed to independence and, immediately afterwards, a *coup d'état* led by the socialist party. At this point, the history bifurcates into two parallel histories: that of the London diaspora, who left Seychelles during these processes of upheaval to live in a transnational immigrant milieu in the UK; and that of those who remained in Seychelles, the generation of young African socialists tasked with building the nation.

This thesis takes place between these two groups of people, and I outline a story of my own maternal kin that overlaps with these histories, before giving an account of how this positionality impacted upon my methods. The next section expands on the methods used within London and the particular issues associated with that ethnographic context. In the section after that, I do the same thing for Seychelles. I clarify some of the issues associated with language, both in the field and during the process of writing up, and end the chapter with descriptions of key informants who recur throughout the thesis.

Fieldwork for this project was carried out in London (primarily West, but also East and South) and Seychelles (primarily on Mahé, with visits to Ste Anne, Praslin and La Digue).

While I provide a colonial history of Seychelles in this chapter, this has been drawn from a variety of written sources and written to emphasise the mobilities and intersecting trajectories that constituted the islands as a place. The reader should know, in approaching this “One history”, that it is one among many, and that other strands (the history of land ownership, the history of slave resistance) will be drawn out throughout the thesis. The post-colonial, post-liberation history that follows is bifurcated because it draws on the accounts of informants in both Seychelles and London; unlike the older material, it cannot pretend to be impartial or objective. Instead, I have tried to give an idea of the scope of both sets of experiences. In providing background information on both places, I seek to emphasise the connections between the two and the fact that London cannot be taken for granted as an ethnographic context; that it is part of the global archipelago created through processes of diaspora and migration. To that end I have sought to historicise the diaspora’s interaction with it and locate them with an immigrant milieu. In the final section, on methods, I explain how research was carried out, as well as my own positionality and place within this transnational network.

One history

The Seychelles islands are distributed between 3° to 5° south of the equator. The nearest landmasses (though proximity, here, is relative) are Madagascar and the Africa. While the criss-crossing trade routes that constituted the Indian Ocean World (Pearson 2003:5, 12) meant that the archipelago was known to sailors in the region, they had no human inhabitants until the period of European colonization. Over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the islands were drawn into the European colonial world as objects with strategic value, positioned ‘between’ Africa and Asia and with an abundance of timber for ship-building, and were eventually claimed by France in 1770. The first settlers (drawn from La

Réunion) included free European whites, South Asians, and enslaved Africans.⁴ They settled the small Inner Island of Ste Anne, and later moved to largest island, Mahé.

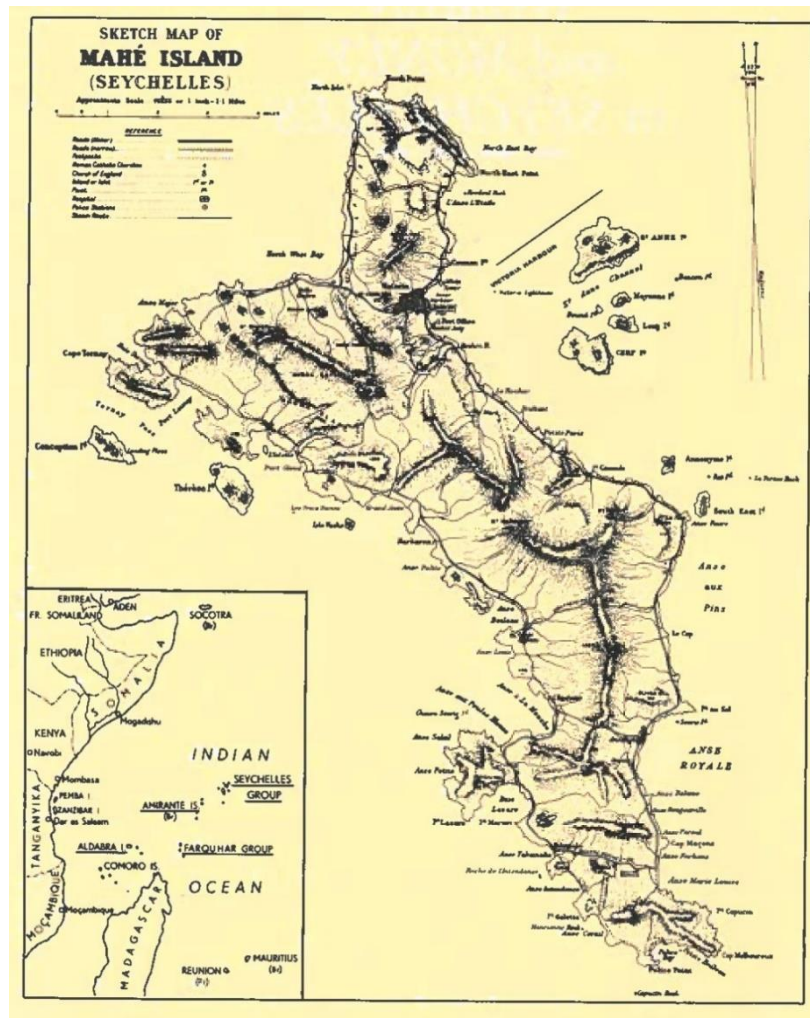


Figure 3. A map of the main island, Mahé (not picturing the land reclamation that has occurred since the 1990s) (Benedict and Benedict 1982: ii).

Throughout the 18th century, the population of the islands increased, but the ethnic and racial makeup remained consistent with this first iteration of the colony.

L'Etablissement du Roi (the town that was to become the capital, Victoria) was founded on

⁴ Sources give the numbers: fifteen whites, seven slaves, five South Indians and one black woman (Benedict and Benedict 1982:117). I exercise caution in reproducing these numbers as the "black woman," mentioned by a variety of authors, is neither clearly an enslaved African, nor a free person.

Mahé, and land concessions were drawn up amongst the habitants. The habitants cultivated spices and other fruiting plants in an experimental fashion, eventually establishing plantations (Durup 2013:7). The primary crop at this time was cotton (Benedict and Benedict 1982:129), an extremely labour-intensive product, and consequently enslaved Africans were imported from Madagascar (via La Réunion and Mauritius). Some of these enslaved people were Malagasy in origin, while others were taken from across the continent. Many were from Mozambique (McAteer 1991:256); ethnic origins listed in records from the early 19th century include “Maconde” (Makonde) and “Maquoi” (Makua) (Taylor 2005:30).⁵

In 1794, Seychelles capitulated to the British, and was ceded to Britain, as a dependency of Mauritius, under the Treaty of Paris in 1814. The abolition of slavery in 1835, and the collapse of the cotton markets, retrenched earlier forms of racial knowledge and social differentiation (Lionnet 1972:97). The emergence of social class was racialized from the outset, as the plantation depended on a logic of racial difference – and the plantation was the *raison d’être* of the small, isolated colony. The plantocracy, who formed the upper class on the basis of controlling land and therefore material wealth, was a white French population often topped up with settlers from Mauritius. Incentivising outsiders to stay proved difficult, and the planters were perpetually anxious about the numerical predominance of the enslaved Africans upon whom their own survival depended (McAteer 2002:127). This anxiety was perhaps rooted in fear that ‘European’ social life could not be reproduced in a context in which there was a paucity of other white people to wed (Hall 2017:72). It was also a reflection of the precarious nature of a social system that had to remake itself anew every day through violence (ibid. 69-70). Modern histories claim that

⁵ Loanwords include contributions from Bemba, Bantu, Kingo, Sena and Wolof, as well as (perhaps more obviously) Swahili (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009:228-9).

enslaved Africans led a relatively privileged existence in Seychelles when compared with other colonies (Taylor 2005:31), though this ought to be read through an emphasis not on “the “quality of treatment” but [...] the symbolic and material economy of this system” (Vergès 1999:15). Instances of *marronage* – escape; violent resistance – occurred in Seychelles (McAteer 2002:35, 112; Scarr 1998:51) (see Chapter 5) just as they did across plantation world, suggesting that any surface-level difference in treatment did not ameliorate the dehumanising nature of slavery (Durup 2013:29). By 1826, cotton production had been outstripped by American competition, prompting some planters to resettle in Mauritius and encouraging others into material and economic intimacy with freed slaves (Benedict and Benedict 1982:129). While the upper class solidified into the *grann blan* (‘big whites’), and whiteness was inextricably tied to wealth in the Seychellois imaginary, it was this intimacy that came to structure social life.

While some historical narratives have held that the emergent middle class collapsed along with the cotton market (Benedict and Benedict 1982:139), this contention is complex. Seychelles did not preserve a “brown” intermediate class between white and black populations, as many Caribbean countries did (Hall 2017:25), but some categories of person were nonetheless figured as occupying a middle position between masters and slaves. Since the early days of the colony there had been frequent instances of cohabitation between white men and African women – notable because their frequency and openness was considered remarkable (and shameful) by European observers at the time (Taylor 2005:5). These relationships – which despite their characterisation as voluntary cannot be separated, in Seychelles or other parts of the colonial world, from various forms of coercion, violence and force (Vergès 1999:15) – resulted in mixed-race offspring. Some of these offspring were freed and even legally recognised as children. Slaves were sometimes freed strategically – a process that maintained the master’s social influence

whilst abrogating his economic responsibilities, and this did not necessarily improve the material conditions of enslaved people but altered their legal status (McAteer 1991:255). “Coloured” Creoles of mixed black and white ancestry were encouraged to migrate from Mauritius in the belief that they were well-suited to the climate and geography of Seychelles, and would provide an appropriate buffer between races (Durup 2013:13). East and South Asians settled in Seychelles, and were figured as part of a ‘middleman’ class; while, as in other parts of the region, they were often associated with mercantile occupations (Benedict and Benedict 1982:140)⁶, they were also frequently labourers and intermarried with white, black and mixed-race Creoles.

Seychelles differed from other plantation societies in that the high rate of exogamy between the above groups did not create a clear middle class but resulted in the expansion of the black, Afro-Creole population (Lionnet 1972:97). Perhaps the determinant here was an absence of differentiation in material conditions, and the surface-level, token quality of the terms ‘slave’ and ‘free man.’ The abolition of slavery in Seychelles was promulgated in 1835, though it did not take place until 1838 (ibid. 98). Cotton became entirely unsustainable without the forced labour of Africans, and plantation production continued to shift towards the less labour-intensive cinnamon and copra. The formerly enslaved were pressed to become “apprenticed” to their former masters, living on and working the same land as before for a nominal wage (McAteer 2000:41). Some flatly refused these conditions, preferring to eke out subsistence at the level of family units rather than chase the possibility of future accumulation (Sauer 1967:24). Seychellois planters petitioned the British government for loans with which to import Indian “coolie” labour – a process that

⁶ This association is so durable because it was a stereotype prevalent throughout the Indian Ocean region - see Brennan (2012) and Carter and Kwong (2009). As such, the lives of those who did not fit this stereotype and whose existence was characterised by poverty and indenture are often forgotten, or made to conform to the image.

did contribute to middle class formation in other contexts – but were unsuccessful (Benedict and Benedict 1982:131). Instead, so-called Liberated Africans – enslaved in Africa and put ashore by Arab traders – were re-settled in Seychelles and incorporated into indenture. They were treated as a socially problematic category who required special education and religious instruction; their status was functionally no different than it had been prior to Abolition (Taylor 2005:226).

It must be understood that the above social and racial categories, though they describe the distribution of political and economic power, were to some extent tautological. Anyone who could access the social status conferred by holding large areas of land or lay claim to the term ‘planter,’ regardless of their parentage or provenance, was theoretically entitled to ownership of enslaved people (McAteer 1991:255) and placed in closer proximity to whiteness. Besides, the political and economic power conferred by this status was local and limited; the British government tended to be unresponsive to the entreaties and demands of Seychellois (ibid. 285). The colony remained relatively poor and easily impacted by fluctuations in foreign and regional markets, despite becoming a Crown Colony (with a British governor) in 1903 (Taylor 2005:370).

This poverty and marginality contributed to the movement of Seychellois out of the islands, as colonial networks began to make large-scale migration possible. Those who remained at home became accustomed to food scarcity. During the First World War, Seychellois volunteered for the British Army and many – even among the *grann blan*, for whom this military service shored up an idealised aristocratic role – were rejected as unfit. Of those who made their way into the East African regiments, many died of beri-beri (indicative of poor nutrition) upon arriving on the Coast (McAteer 2000:218). Economic depression continued through the Second World War, as the needs of British colonies were

put aside. Seychellois were reliant on coconuts as both a food source and an export crop (Kothari and Wilkinson 2013:97), but growth in population and the proliferation of pests bedevilled large-scale copra production. Seychellois continued to migrate out to British East Africa (and from there, across the colonial world), not only to serve in the armed forces, but to work as mechanics, miners and bureaucrats. They became known as the 'Kenya-borns.' Migration was often facilitated or eased by white ancestry or the ability to pass for white, but black Seychellois too benefitted from the fact that they were characterised by the British not as 'European' or 'African', but 'Other' (a category shared with East African Asians, with whom Seychellois were grouped spatially in East African towns and cities).

This mobility not only engendered a transnational community, but contributed to an emerging national consciousness. In 1939, the Seychelles Taxpayers Association was founded in order to better represent the (often property-based) interests (Scarr 2000:134) of *grann blan* democratic reformers. The use of Seychelles as a "dumping ground" for political exiles from across the Arab and African world was part of the development of anticolonial sentiment in Seychelles (Kothari 2012:701), especially as some exiles – among them African kings like Prempeh of the Ashanti – left families and children behind when they returned home. The 'Kenya-borns' were politicised by continental African anti-colonialism (Lee 1976:122), and active in trade union movements. Two such men – at first collaborators, later figured as Manichean opposites – became central figures within political life in Seychelles: James Mancham, and France Albert René.

Mancham, as leader of the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) became Chief Minister and subsequently Prime Minister in the elections of 1970 and 1974 respectively. A gregarious 'playboy' of mixed race descent, he was sympathetic to British interests in the

region and hoped for closer union with the UK. For him, this was a question of “how Seychelles could remain a colony in a world where ‘colony’ was a dirty word” (1983:90). His attachment to Britain was sentimental, as he (like René) had been educated in London; the British government’s attachment to him was strategic, based on preventing the spread of African socialism to Seychelles.⁷ His brand of multi-racial democracy would be based on the tourist industry (Scarr 2000:168), turning Seychelles into “a place of smiles and laughter with, under each coconut tree, a young man with a guitar” (Mancham 1983:13). An airport was constructed in 1971 and paid for by the British, in exchange for the detachment of several islands as part of the British Indian Ocean Territory; there is thus a connection between the development of tourism in Seychelles and the displacement of the Chagos Islanders (ibid. 92). Thus tourism replaced the plantation at the heart of the country’s economy (Franda 1982:76) even as it reinforced the idea of the country’s reliance on outside interests (Benedict and Benedict 1982:152) and its place within a wider context of decolonization and re-militarization.

This strategy did little to assuage anticolonial concerns, which emerged from inequalities of wealth that were exacerbated by tourism, and which affected the black majority most severely. The Seychelles People’s United Party (SPUP), led by René, was able to present itself as the voice of Afro-Creole dissent and disaffection with the colonial order – a position that was characterised by the SDP as cynical, in light of René’s own white (albeit working class) background (Scarr 2000:172). Nonetheless, large numbers of ordinary Seychellois flocked to demonstrations and instigated strikes (St Ange 2007:39-50). When Seychelles gained independence from Britain in 1976, it was partly due to this anticolonial movement; but it was perhaps also a consequence of British indifference to the small

⁷ Mancham later wrote in his autobiography that the SDP were paid a regular allowance by the British government for use in election campaigns (1983:115-7).

colony. The two parties entered a coalition. Mancham became reluctant President of the new nation, René reluctant Prime Minister.

In 1977, while Mancham was visiting London, René and the SPUP staged a coup (in Kreol, *koudeta*) with the aid of Tanzanian militiamen, who were to remain a visible presence for several years afterwards. The country was placed under a curfew, and citizens were urged to consider themselves republican African socialists. In 1979, Seychelles officially became a one-party socialist state, and the SPUP (becoming the Seychelles People's Progressive Front and, later, the People's Party) set about a programme of land redistribution and educational reform. René aimed to create a generation of model African soldiers, farmers and poets, proclaiming, "the road is traced, the tree is planted, the bud starts coming out, the fruit will be there tomorrow" (René 1984:146). He was to remain President until 2004 (even after multipartyism was 'reintroduced' in 1992) and his tenure was characterised by the creation of new employment opportunities, new transnational connections, and new possible futures; also by surveillance, covert violence, and accusations of corruption on all sides. During this period of upheaval, supporters of the SDP (often simply referred to as 'the opposition') fled in large numbers to the UK, Australia, Canada, Italy and America. While there had long been a contingent of Seychellois in London – both the upper classes, for whom a British education was considered prestigious; and the lower classes, for whom it opened up economic opportunities – these political events changed the character of out-migration for Seychellois. Henceforth, the relationship between the diaspora and those who remained in the islands (to say less of the state itself) was tainted with suspicion and fear.

Two parallel histories

The London diaspora had until this point been composed of Seychellois who had, throughout the early and mid-20th century, travelled there for educational or economic reasons. The old elite had valued British university education highly; time in the UK reinforced their pseudo-aristocratic status at home even as it sometimes exposed them to the disdain of Britons (Mancham 1983:33). Seychellois of slimmer means moved to the UK in order to work in the National Health Service, at secretarial and hospitality jobs, and to send financial remittances home. They discovered London as a bitterly cold, wind-swept, depressing place. Perhaps more than the *grann blan* had occasion to, they discovered themselves as racialized. Blackness, during the period succeeding the World Wars in Britain, was a category that transcended individual ethnic affiliations and a variety of backgrounds, skin shades and phenotypes – it placed Asians, Africans and Caribbeans together (Gilroy 2013:36). It was not, as it had been in Seychelles, offset by proximity to whiteness or to wealth; rather, it constituted a form of perpetual outsider-dom in relation to both whiteness and Britishness (ibid. xxxiv). At the same time, blackness provided a basis for mobilization that was not necessarily limited by the variety of everyday experiences it encompassed (ibid. 37). Seychellois, living alongside other racialized Commonwealth emigrants, in parts of London where ethnic enclaves proliferated, participated in black events, spaces and churches. Just as the Kenya-borns had been spatially aligned with East African Asians, so Seychellois in London often lived in areas (adjacent to Heathrow) such as Hounslow and Heston, with substantial South Asian immigrant populations. They had romantic relationships and children with partners from a variety of ethnic, racial and national backgrounds. Nonetheless, their own ethnic affiliation to being Creole and Seychellois was often minimised, and perhaps this was a consequence of consignment to a much more general category (though it seems significant that British

people were, in the accounts of Seychellois from this time, wholly unfamiliar with Seychelles).

The Seychellois 'community' was mostly visible in *bal Seselwa* (Seychellois dances) held in nightclubs and pub function halls, where Seychellois genres of music were played, alcohol was consumed, Creole food was eaten, and old gossip was revived. Returning home was often prohibitively expensive, especially prior to the existence of the airport in Seychelles; even after flights became commonplace, it was often unfeasible to visit regularly. In an experience common across many diasporas, return was marked by the fact that relationships with those at home had been transformed or strained by distance.

The new political exiles were different in that they had less hope of returning to Seychelles. Many opposition supporters were Afro-Creoles who had been part of the old anticolonial movement, and they were arriving in London in the late 1970s and early '80s, at a moment when collective black identity was heavily politicised (Gilroy 2013:89). They subsequently experienced economic marginalisation, heavy-handed policing, and the institutional barriers faced by black Britons at a time when they were already materially disadvantaged; like other African immigrants displaced by Cold War politics, there was not yet room for them within a predominantly Caribbean black Britishness (ibid. xii). They did not have the means to return to Seychelles, and had to use their resources to keep afloat in London.

The *grann blan* who fled were those who had refused to renounce their affiliation with the opposition, and they remained objects of interest to the new post-coup government (now the Seychelles People's Progressive Front – SPPF). The former SDP (which, though dominated by *grann blan* Seychellois, included people from various ethnic backgrounds) were galvanised by their exile to continue attempts to remove the SPPF and

René from power. One notable attempt was orchestrated by Mancham, who approached the South African government for assistance with a counter-coup. The failed counter-coup, which took place in 1981, was led by the mercenary ‘Mad’ Mike Hoare and resulted in a shoot-out at Seychelles International Airport in Pointe Larue (Ferrari 1999:259); though short-lived, it bequeathed a legacy among the diaspora. Gerard Hoarau, a member of one of the *grann blan* families, was part of the London-based *Mouvement Pour La Resistance* that helped to orchestrate the attempt. In 1985, he was killed in a drive-by shooting off the Edgware Road (ibid. 449) that the rest of the community (both opposition and ruling party supporters) understood to be politically motivated. British attempts to investigate were perceived as half-hearted; the SPPF government conceded that they had been monitoring Hoarau and tapping his phone, but did not accept responsibility for the murder (Penrose and Freeman 1986).⁸ Hoarau is commemorated through annual Masses dedicated to his name, and the widespread suspicion of telephone communication that persists among the diaspora.

For most opposition supporters in London, the political threat was less direct but still troubling. Visits to Seychelles became more feasible after the formal reintroduction of multi-partyism in 1992, but the idea of settling permanently had to be balanced against the possibility of ostracism by neighbours and neglect by family – elements that had historically been part of return, but had not been politicised to the same extent.

Meanwhile, as SDP supporters had begun to leave Seychelles throughout the 1970s and 80s, other young Seychellois were moving back from East Africa to the islands to build the

⁸ An elderly man was arrested in connection with the murder in Antrim, Northern Island, in August 2018, but released without charge (BBC 2018).

new nation. They worked in education or in newly-formed government ministries, entered the police force or joined the army. A state of emergency had been declared, and there was a nightly curfew enforced by the military, but the new interiority was coupled with new opportunities for connection. Young people in the islands became African socialist citizens, alumni of the National Youth Service (see Chapter 5); through state initiatives they travelled to China, Russia and Cuba to attend university or participate in military training. The SPPF era was characterised by both militarism and the production of art, which combined to produce dance and music *troupes* that were also *troops* (see Chapter 5). Seychellois Kreol began to be taken seriously as a language. Pride in the new nation was of the greatest necessity, and it was manifested at different levels: pride in one's school, one's district, one's island. Life for young people was dictated by *animateurs*, choreographers and directors, and they were pragmatic, balancing optimism and patriotism against an awareness that as they displayed themselves they were also being watched. Gossip, a national pastime since the early days of the colony, became continuous with other forms of monitoring and surveillance; casual chit-chat, especially over the phone, could result in imprisonment or sudden disappearance.⁹ Since tourism had not been ejected along with the expulsion of the SDP, but had taken on even greater importance, Seychellois lived with the double-consciousness of life in a paradise that was sometimes a prison (Kothari and Wilkinson 2010:1399).

After 1992, elections – both presidential and to the National Assembly – began to be held with regularity, though power did not change hands. Mancham and other opposition figures were welcomed back and publicly forgiven by the ruling party.

⁹Some of the disappeared are named in Mancham's book *Seychelles: Personalities of Yesterday* (2005), but they are placed alongside historical figures and other Seychellois of note, and their deaths are described in euphemistic terms.

Seychelles experienced a further opening up to the outside world, as flights became cheaper and more accessible, members of the diaspora returned (sometimes for good), and the nature of tourism changed. The emphasis on ‘high-yield’ tourists and the luxury market, combined with the islands’ status as a tax haven, attracted visitors who demanded a relaxing environment and the discretion of the locals. An aura of suspicion and surveillance persisted, and the opposition were often accused of having no real desire to gain power. Allegations of corruption were hurled at both parties by voters, who continued to express dissent through protests and collective action. Meanwhile, there was a continual traffic of individuals between the two parties – opposition representatives re-appeared as government ministers, and vice-versa. In 2004 René stepped down as President in favour of James Michel. In 2015 (just prior to my arrival) there was widespread dissatisfaction at Michel’s re-election as President; in the National Assembly election of 2016, a coalition of opposition parties named Linyon Demokratik Seselwa (‘Seychellois Democratic Union’, LDS) won an historic majority of seats.

On evening in October 2016, Michel suddenly resigned in favour of his own Vice-President, Danny Faure – a “Kenya-born” Seychellois. All through the night, Seychellois drove wildly through the streets of Victoria, blasting music and honking car horns; or stood outside their houses and looked at each other and the sky.

A family history

The above histories are not only the background to this thesis, but have methodological implications for its argument. Firstly, it should be apparent that Seychelles is small, and that race has been a central organising principle, expressed particularly in relation to the plantation and forms of social organisation based around this institution. Here I wish to

introduce the idea that kin networks and the family have been instrumental in the reproduction of racial categories and their material effects in Seychelles and transnationally. My own maternal family history, which is interwoven with the national and transnational histories narrated above, provides evidence of this. It overlaps with and resembles the family histories of my interlocutors at some points, and differs at others. Setting out the precise social milieu of my own kin will also allow me to explain my understanding of my positionality, as well as how interlocutors placed me.

My maternal grandparents were both 'Kenya-borns,' children of Seychellois migrants. Grandad Paul had European ancestry and (perhaps more significantly) appeared white; Granny Cecile was a black Afro-Creole woman from a largely black family (though she was rumoured to have South Asian ancestry too). Their match was made within the spatial and ethnic confines of a British East Africa that figured them as 'Other.' My mother was one of the eldest of their twelve children. When she was thirteen, after the Mau Mau uprising, Kenyan independence and the move towards nationalisation, her family relocated back to Seychelles. My mother and her siblings experienced this return as a traumatic event that brought extended family histories and tensions to the foreground. They, as Kenya-borns, found Seychelles small and provincial. Their relatives and classmates considered them either snobbish pretenders to European-ness, or backward and African, and they were often asked whether they had lived in the forest in Kenya.

They grew up in the north of Mahé, mostly in Belonie, a neighbourhood associated with music, bars and brothels. When the girls finished school, prior to Independence, Granny Cecile put considerable effort into sending them abroad, and my mother chose to live, work and marry in Britain. The boys were encouraged to take up jobs close to home and marry local girls. Together, the siblings bought a plot of land in Belonie and built a

house for Granny Cecile and Grandad Paul. This house was the locus of family life for many years. Some of my uncles lived there with their own families, while an aunt lived with her family in a smaller house on the same plot. Inside the house was Granny Cecile's dominion, filled with knick-knacks and images of the Pope and President; outside the house, in the yard, Grandad Paul held court among his sons and friends. Grandad Paul passed away in 2006, but it was only in 2015, when Granny Cecile died, that the house became a contentious, unhappy object. Eventually, only one uncle resided there permanently (a second uncle was a frequent guest). Not all the siblings who had moved abroad were able to visit often, owing both to the expense of plane tickets and their status as non-citizens (since they had departed before Independence and the *koudeta*). But two of the siblings who had relocated to London, Auntie Vivian and Uncle Frank, would sometimes stay at the house when visiting Seychelles, and would make efforts toward its upkeep.

I dwell on this house and the processes of contention that surround it for two reasons. Firstly, I had planned my fieldwork, prior to Granny Cecile's death, with the idea that I would stay with her there. During the London part of my fieldwork, I was persuaded to stay with a cousin instead. However, sheer chance led to my moving into the house at Belonie in April 2016, and I stayed until November 2016. Secondly (and in direct relation to this first point), this house prompted me to understand the importance of houses in general. In the context of this thesis, the house is not only ethnographic object or locus (see Chapters 3 and 4), but also method; it was by dwelling in a variety of houses, empty and full, inhabited and uninhabited, that I understood their significance for my interlocutors.

Familiarity and strangeness

The size of both Seychelles and its diaspora means that it would not have been feasible to operate outside of my own kinship networks in either Seychelles or London, nor (in the context of a project that explores the nation, the family, and intimacy) would it have been desirable to do so. It mattered to my interlocutors that they could place me through these networks, and thus it had an impact on access. Family was bound up with place – where one was from, and where one dwelt – as well as with race and colour. It was centred on the house, so that the house has both methodological and analytical significance. And it implies obligations and reciprocity – ties that outlast the encounter in the field, and have implications for the production of knowledge.

Access, in Seychelles and London, was predicated on being placed as a Seychellois, and this was expressed through the idiom of kinship. London-based interlocutors, when I thanked them for their time and generosity, would say, “You’re our people” and sometimes explicitly, “It’s like being family.” In Seychelles, kinship had a more practical dimension. I was granted a Research Permit by the Ministry of Culture in part because the fact that I was staying with family pre-empted concerns about my financial resources. Even when I engaged strangers, they were often not complete strangers, and would try to locate me within their knowledge of Seychellois families and locales – knowledge that, as a child of the diaspora, I did not have. My interlocutors frequently knew more about my family than I did. Sometimes, successfully placing me would prompt an enthusiastic reaction (“I know your uncle! He’s a good man!”). Sometimes, the response would be a muted, subtly judgemental, “Oh, I know those people...”

Access came with clear obligations, intellectual and moral. Interlocutors at the Ministry of Culture, who were responsible for granting me a Research Permit, were clear that they did not approve of an extractive academic model in which they never discovered

what had become of the data collected by researchers. Individuals unaffiliated with the state expected a level of sensitivity from me not only because of the difference in our roles ('interlocutor' and 'researcher'), but because I was expected to understand Creole behavioural norms and values, and to act accordingly. Part of this involved a sensitivity to the history of party politics. While exploring *kreolite* involved engaging with the state as an entity, I had to be clear with interlocutors that I had no political allegiance in either direction, and had relationships with people on both sides.

There are many ways in which I fell short of the standards set for me. My distance from Seychelles – being raised in London, engaging mostly with other members of the diaspora, and visiting the islands only once prior to fieldwork – meant that I did not always immediately realise what interlocutors were communicating. Furthermore, sometimes my understanding of my position – as well as what constituted a desirable or aspirational position – differed from that of my interlocutors.

This was most obvious to me in relation to race (which was not easily separated from gender and class). As a white-looking woman raised in London, I was assumed by some interlocutors to be a member of a *grann blan* family (one man even went so far as to guess, merely from looking at me – “Hoarau? Tirant?” – the names of the old plantocracy). This kind of misunderstanding was easily rectified, but there was a concomitant issue that it took much longer to become aware of. It was expected that, because I was white-looking, I would play up the whiteness of my family and insist on their European-ness, and some interlocutors were puzzled when I would not. It must be emphasised that there was a *further* assumption upon which this rested: not that it was, in fact, better to be white, but that white people invariably thought it was. The way that whiteness is valued in Seychelles will be explored further in Chapter 1; here, I wish only to draw a contrast between this and

my own self-perception, which is that of a mixed race, postcolonial descendent of a black mother and black grandmother.

My own understanding of my positionality, as a “halfie” anthropologist, also has attendant obligations (Abu-Lughod 1991:142). I am attentive to the ways that academia generally, and anthropology specifically, have reproduced ways of knowing that can be hostile to blackness and black personhood (Harney and Moten 2013; Macharia 2016). These concerns overlap somewhat with those raised by Laura Jeffery and Rebecca Rotter in their work on Chagossian music (2018); the fact that knowledge is shared with researchers (and performers, and heritage practitioners) does not confer the right to circumscribe ideas and practices via a concept of intellectual property rooted in power to exclude. As this thesis deals explicitly with questions of authorship and property (as material phenomena, rather than disembodied concepts), I have tried not to be too hasty in translating Seychellois concepts into an academic idiom. The focus on appearances and materiality emerged from the importance my interlocutors accorded them, and from the understanding that it would be misguided to “perforate” (Minh-Ha 1989:48) objects on the assumption that they were only hiding meaning.

I have tried to place Seychellois knowledge and anthropological knowledge (which are, through the colonial encounter, intimately related to one another) in productive conversation, rather than explaining away Seychellois understandings of the material world via appeals to Western theory. Seychelles has, since the 18th century, been afflicted by a tendency of observers to look at the Creole family and see a congeries of emotional and financial failures and dysfunction. These perspectives were rooted in ideas of African people as uncivilised, Creole people as imperfect hybrids, and the plantation as a totalising institution that erased all that had gone before it. Methodologically speaking, I could not

start my enquiry from those assumptions; from my perspective, that was never how Seychellois families looked.

London

I carried out fieldwork in London between September 2015 and January 2016. During this period, I stayed at my parents' home in suburban West London and sought out interlocutors via social media, as well as re-establishing past contacts and attending *bal Sese/wa*. I was wary of relying too much on Seychellois friends and acquaintances, in case this caused difficulties for my relatives (I later discovered that my own caution in this respect was augmented by the discretion of my family members, who filtered out potential interlocutors near home by selectively omitting mention of them to me!). Instead, I searched Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for anyone who publicly identified as Seychellois, and through this came into contact with Vinn Goute (a food truck specialising in food from Seychelles), Radiosesel (a London-based Seychellois radio station), and a variety of individuals. These contacts were extremely helpful in referring me to others.

Ethnographic research during this period was focused on attending pan-Creole and Seychellois events, and the event-based nature of engagement had methodological consequences. I was invited into spaces where Creoleness was cultivated and consciously performed. Through interviews, carried out in interlocutors' homes across London, as well as in my parents' home, I gained a sense of the way that these special occasions constituted Seychellois *kreolite* as something that existed a little apart from the rest of life. I also focused during this period on documentary and internet-based research that would help me to understand the political context in Seychelles as much as possible.

Whilst I had imagined that the disconnect in my family between London and Seychelles was the product of very specific dynamics, a sense of slight estrangement was common among my interlocutors. Some families were affiliated with the opposition, which had at times limited or changed the nature of their contact with Seychelles and relatives there; others had lived in a variety of different places with what they described as “stronger” cultures than Seychelles, and were worried that they would not properly represent *kreolite* for my benefit. Most, as I had expected, had a deeply ambivalent relationship with Seychelles – visiting frequently, missing the place and the people passionately, whilst remaining frustrated with the level of gossip and strife amongst their compatriots.

If relationships with British people, or members of other diasporas, seemed comparatively frictionless, this could not be taken for granted. Anti-immigrant and racist sentiment was very much in evidence in suburban West London, and was a fact of life for many interlocutors. None of this was tacit or subtle – one young man wearily recited to me a litany of recent racist abuse he had received, while older men described the indignity of being patted down before entering pubs and nightclubs or shouted at on the street. These experiences were not specific to Seychellois, but have been part of the everyday experiences of Londoners of colour for centuries. During my fieldwork, these experiences were inflected by the discussion surrounding UK’s continued membership of the European Union, and the heavily racialized image of immigration that was part of this debate.

Living in a part of London where I had grown up, I had thought I might have to engineer the focal distance to make ‘familiar’ processes and interactions ‘strange,’ but pre-Brexit political discourse accomplished some of this for me. While I could write about this in neutral terms, it is impossible to do so whilst communicating the profound effect that

this apparently necessary discussion of free movement had upon everyday life. My white British co-workers and acquaintances fretted about how the “community” was “getting”, speculated that dark-skinned people were terrorists, and harangued non-English speakers in shops and at bus stops. My mother, a light-skinned black woman, had already experienced British racism, so it would not be true to say that I became aware of my status as the child of an immigrant, a stranger. London did not change before my eyes, but my picture of it became clearer. I situate my London fieldwork in the context of this chauvinism and white identitarianism because race and racism form central parts of my analysis in this thesis, particularly in Chapter 1.

Seychelles

I arrived in Seychelles in February 2016, and stayed until November 2016. Fieldwork was characterised by fairly frequent shifts in locale and living situation. It is important that, although I spoke to interlocutors across heritage, the arts, state and non-state contexts, my interlocutors themselves worked across these boundaries. Working at multiple occupations, a strategy common to individuals in post-plantation societies, remains normal in Seychelles (Boswell 2008:33). While I carried out formal interviews with around 60 interlocutors in Seychelles and the UK, I had much more sustained contact with a far smaller number of people. In Seychelles, I encountered and engaged with the relatives of my London interlocutors: the son of a family who had been especially welcoming; the cousin of a DJ, himself a renowned musician; heritage professionals, artists and artisans who knew my own London-based family members well. Perhaps more significantly, as far as methods are concerned, my interlocutors were often heritage practitioners who were

visual artists who were tradesmen or educators. They were accustomed to code-switching across these modes, and they expected me to keep up as they did so.

The Ministry of Culture was the central gatekeeper and the primary influence on my research, especially during the first few months. Under my own auspices I had contacted Nigel Henri, a well-known visual artist, who subsequently introduced me to other artists and creative practitioners, but I waited for permission from the Ministry before formally interviewing them. Staff at the Ministry – particular in the National Heritage division – were extremely helpful in organising these kinds of structured appointments, inviting me to workshops, and assisting me with translation and other practical concerns.

Many of my initial meetings with interlocutors happened in and around the National Cultural Centre in Victoria; in addition to the fact that the Ministry and National Gallery are based there, the Carrefour des Arts (a parade of shops selling art materials, music, and paintings) is nearby, and music performances are regularly held in the car park between the two. For the first month of fieldwork (until the wet monsoon was over), I stayed at Cousin Benjamin's house in the hills. From there, I moved to Uncle Terence's house, in a new social housing development on reclaimed land. These were very different environments, spatially and infrastructurally; owing to the difference in height above sea level, they even had different weather.

In April, I left Uncle Terence's house to live in "Granny's house" at Belonie. Living in the centre of town, and being (for the first time since arrival) un beholden to the daily rhythms of a family with young children, meant that I became more active in life outside my own immediate surroundings. Staff at the Ministry were cordial and helpful, but clear that it was unusual for foreign researchers to stay for longer than three months. Nigel's contacts and the circles in which he was active assumed greater importance and my

research became less formal and less bound to the structure of interviews, appointments and workshops. I encountered more of my own relatives and the full, complex structure of the family unfolded before me. I became familiar with the ways in which the arts, education and heritage intersected, and formed closer relationships with interlocutors across fields.

In August, I began to carry out a consultation on behalf of the non-governmental (though to some degree parastatal) organisation Seychelles Heritage Foundation, who wished to manage their school Heritage Clubs more effectively. During this period, I visited schools across Mahé, as well as on La Digue and Praslin, met with club coordinators (usually teachers) and pupils, and administered short surveys on behalf of SHF. I assisted with Club summer holiday activities, and preparations for Festival Kreol events. I had developed friendships with some of my interlocutors in visual art, and with individuals in adjacent fields. Two of these, Rayna and Mervyn, were especially generous in spending time with me and sharing their knowledge of folklore and tradition.

A note on languages

Though the largest body of literature relating to creolization in Seychelles is primarily concerned with the Kreol language, this was not the focus of my research; nonetheless, language was central to my experience of fieldwork. Kreol is not only the most widely-spoken language in Seychelles, but is significant in mediating relationships with the diaspora. The level of academic attention it is given reflects not only the interests of researchers outside Seychelles, but also the importance that it has for Seychellois themselves. My own position in relation to Kreol is therefore methodologically salient.

I began fieldwork in London with only patchy knowledge of Kreol, but this was largely unproblematic as it felt natural to my interlocutors to speak to me in English. Kreol entered the conversation in fragments, especially in group settings, and while I was not expected to understand immediately I was nonetheless expected to make an effort. While growing up I encountered it as the language of adult gossip and secrets – a language that I was not supposed to absorb or understand – and this experience seemed common among the younger generation of the diaspora, who had been born in England or lived most of their lives there. For them, language was sometimes a factor that distanced them from being Seychellois; I explore this dynamic at greater length in Chapter 1. From the outset of the project, I acquired Kreol learning materials and learned some basic vocabulary (augmented by my very basic knowledge of French), but Kreol grammar remained mysterious to me until I was immersed in it.

In Seychelles, Kreol was the most widely spoken language. Many Seychellois speak good English, and it is used throughout daily life regardless of the presence of foreigners; the emergence of a ‘Kringlish’ dialect that blurs the two has been noted, and it is simply commonplace to switch languages (and codes) throughout various kinds of speech.¹⁰ However, English proficiency was often generational or related to the experiences of specific individuals – their educational background, whether they had travelled abroad, and socioeconomic factors that might broadly be understood in terms of class. The relationship with Kreol was usually as a spoken language; experience of it as written, grammatical, and conforming to a particular orthography was also informed by individual experiences (discussed in Chapter 1).

¹⁰ French, which retains its colonial associations, has a more complex legacy; while many of my interlocutors understood it, they were often reluctant to engage French speakers in anything other than English, wary of their own accents and speech habits being understood as ‘broken’ or improper French.

When carrying out interviews, I primarily spoke English even if my interlocutor responded in Kreol, for the simple reason that I wanted to be aware of when and how misunderstandings arose. I was not confident enough of my Kreol to trust that I would notice this otherwise. While it is conceivable that I could have lived in Seychelles and even engaged in productive structured interviews without acquiring any Kreol, participant-observation would have been impossible under such conditions. I was clear on arrival that I was learning Kreol, but as interlocutors placed me as an English speaker, it was sometimes hard to make clear the implications of this: that I was listening to Kreol speech that happened around me, and that I had some understanding of it. In fieldnotes, I had to be clear for myself as to when I understood something that was intended for my ears, and when I had overheard something that was not meant to be understood by me. This was often blurred by the fact that interlocutors would sometimes test my understanding of Kreol whilst appearing, to a non-Kreol speaker, not to pay attention to me at all (an echo of how the language was used in my childhood home!). Sometimes staff from the Ministry, or acquaintances and friends, would act as translators for me; I was always aware that such mediations left things out and transformed details, and often I could hear this happening.

I have therefore had to employ a sense of discretion and proportion in writing fieldnotes, coding them, and drawing on them as data. It would be unproductive analytically to pretend that these accounts and translations are impartial and have not been transformed in the act of recording them; it is not trivial that the imperfection of translation is a facet of anthropological and academic knowledge more generally (Clifford and Marcus 1986). And this is not a concern brought to bear by the researcher upon the topic – as I will explain throughout the thesis, but especially in Chapter 1, these were questions that preoccupied my interlocutors too.

One other important linguistic issue relates to the descriptors used throughout the thesis. I refer to African-descended Seychellois as Afro-Creole; though this is not a term in common use among Seychellois themselves, it has a history of usage in the region (Boswell 2006; Jeffery 2010a). Seychellois would call themselves “Creole” and usually understand that to imply blackness and Africanness, but the modifier is necessary to communicate this fact to readers who may be familiar with a variety of Creole identities, not all of them black or African. Individual interlocutors had very complicated relationships with the idea of blackness, and for this reason I have not followed Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988:1332n2) in capitalising the term Black, though I agree that in other contexts there are good reasons for doing so. While Achille Mbembe has productively engaged this idea of Blackness in an African and international context (2017), I am concerned that doing so in the context of Seychelles would imply a stronger relationship with an Americanized diaspora identity than presently exists. American Blackness, like black diasporic identity in the UK (Gilroy 2013:xii), has often struggled to accommodate African immigrant experiences; while Mbembe’s Blackness encompasses the idea of negation and exclusion, it still does so along primarily Atlantic lines. Indian Ocean and East African littoral blackness are shaped by a different mix of forces, among them the influence of Asian and Arab racial knowledges. I use Asian, European and African as proper nouns, which make a claim (however fictive) to nationality or territory. I do not capitalise black or white, and would not capitalise Creole were it not an established grammatical convention to do so, as their referents lie beyond nation, territory, and what is proper.

Key people

In this thesis, the scale of the population and networks involved have implications for how I have dealt with anonymity and confidentiality. Interlocutors who spoke to me in their capacity as public figures are identified by real names (first and second). All other names are pseudonyms, and some people who have appeared under their real names are also present pseudonymously. I have also made use of fictionalisation and composites for some figures (Charles, for example, is a composite of several male artists who worked at multiple occupations). Here I identify some key figures who recur across chapters.

Uncle Frank has lived in London for many years. He is active in the diaspora community there, but visits Seychelles at least annually. He is passionate about fresh fish from Seychelles and goes to great effort to procure and transport it.

Uncle Terence lived in London for a brief time, but moved back to Seychelles to look after Granny Cecile. He lives on a housing estate on reclaimed land, in a new-built house that he and his wife put great care into decorating.

Jean-Claude Mahoune, an anthropologist at the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture. A jovial, opinionated man who works on the nation's political history, he carries a rucksack wherever he goes.

Nigel Henri, a visual artist, also runs an art supplies shop that functions as a hub for artists across the Seychelles islands. Gregarious and outgoing, he travels frequently to events, workshops and jobs in countries across the Indian Ocean, Africa and Europe.

Achille Kwame Luc, a musician, performer and recognisable figure in and around Baie Lazare, in Mahé. He is committed to Afrocentricism in his art and life, and active in environmental NGOs that seek to preserve the islands' natural heritage. He dresses in a feather hat, Rastafarian beads, and bright madras shirts.

Charles, a visual artist, is in his early forties and is one of the generation who attended the National Youth Service. His art is influenced by this experience of African socialism. He has multiple occupations spread out across Mahé.

Vania, in her early fifties, has lived and travelled abroad, before returning to Seychelles. She is well acquainted with traditional life, and prides herself on knowing everyone.

Rayna, in her forties, lives in a rural part of Mahé and tends a vast garden. She has close friends and family but prides herself on developing friendships with strangers and newcomers.

Mervyn, the same age, lives with her. A formerly wild youth, he attributes his change of character to her good influence. Together they work in the garden, and fish on the shore.

Part I

Chapter 1: Roots: Trees and Genealogies

*Manman Kreol, papa Kreol
Mwan mon osi mon bezwen Kreol
Akoz dan dizef poul
Pa kapab ganny ti kannar.*

Mother is Creole, father is Creole
I too must be Creole
Because in a chicken egg
You can't get a duckling.

Serge Lebrasse (in Georges 2011:257; translation my own)

A very good refreshing place for wood, water, coker nutts, fish and fowle, without any feare or danger, except the allargartes; for you cannot discerne that ever any people had been there before us.

- Thomas Jones, boatswain of the *Ascension* (in Sauer 1967:14)

This chapter argues that being Creole is materialised through an engagement with trees and plants, and begins by interrogating how Seychellois use the term “roots” to describe a relationship to the islands (and other places) that is both natural and productive.

Arborescent and plant-derived language and imagery draws on the history of the plantation as both an institution, and a process through which the islands were populated with plants and people. But it is not simply metaphorical; the materiality of real trees (including the coconut palm and *coco de mer*) is part of producing *kreolite* at an everyday level, through the creation of both art and utilitarian objects. If, at a metaphorical level, the idea of being rooted in the islands allows space for a connection to diasporic blackness, it is also underwritten by ideas of genealogy that privilege European antecedents and take shape in the form of the family tree. State *kreolite* attempts to revalue African heritage, and to propose an alternative African genealogy based around the Kreol language. Art is also

central to this process, as male artists (designated “archivists”) imagine an African heritage that is both material and adapted to this Kreol grammar.

Arborescence

At the end of my fieldwork in 2016, a Réunionnais delegation arrived in Seychelles. It was Festival Kreol – an annual celebration of Creole culture, which takes place in the last week of October (the ‘Creole Month’). The festival draws attendees and participants who travel from across the Indian Ocean, and sometimes further afield; this particular group of visual artists, musicians and storytellers were both staging and attending events centred on the historical links between Seychelles and La Réunion.

The pretext for their visit was an engagement with “roots,” as the very first settlers of Seychelles had sailed from La Réunion, and several Seychellois families were able to trace their history to this moment – the Payets, for example, were known as green-eyed *métis* from a family that had spread across the Indian Ocean. They were welcomed as relatives, but this visit was, confusingly, framed by Seychellois interlocutors as the rediscovery of roots *by* the Réunionnais, as if they had originated in Seychelles rather than the other way around. Time and space were mere details, reconfigured by the imperative to locate Seychelles as a place of origin. Later, at a staged Creole wedding, SBC cameramen arrived to capture the visitors dancing in traditional styles such as *sega*, *kanmtole* and *kotis*. Late in the evening, one of my interlocutors told me excitedly that the cameraman wanted to interview me about “coming to Seychelles and rediscovering my roots”; he quickly lost interest upon discovering that I was not a Réunionnaise of noble European extraction (with a dash of near-undetectable African blood), but a half-Brit half-Seychellois (quite ignoble).

Later in the week, at an art exhibition based on the shared heritage of Indian Ocean Creoles, I sat on a lamp-lit veranda with a group of visual artists: Andre, Charles and Sandra. Everyone was relaxed, and the mood was slightly silly. Andre and Charles were comparing the lengths of their noses. Charles said that his long, narrow nose was “Indian,” while Andre identified his shorter, broader nose as African. Looking around the group, Andre announced, “I am a mixed salad. I have an African nose, but my eyes are green. We are all a mixed salad.”

He nudged Sandra, who had Chinese and European ancestry. “You’re a mixed salad.” She laughed. He pointed to Charles. “And you’re a mixed salad.”

“I’m not a mixed salad, me,” Charles quipped, deadpan. “I grew like mango.”

*

It is perhaps not surprising that roots and plants should have been part of conversation during Festival Kreol, an annual celebration of Creole identity that was both a local opportunity for revelry and one of several events (staged throughout the year) based on the cultural heritage of the islands. These events were nodes with a larger pan-Creole network of places and people, spanning the Indian Ocean (Jeffery 2010a), the Atlantic and beyond. “Roots” language is deployed as an element of the arborescent vocabulary of nation-states, a discourse that naturalises the relationship between territory and identity, and the festival exists in part to communicate the state’s version of *kreolite* to a global public. But in Afro-diasporic contexts, “roots” language draws on the imagery of reggae and Rastafarianism, yearning for a homeland lost through slavery, and a celebratory attitude toward blackness. In the specific examples given above, both a connection to a generalised Creole identity and connections to other racial identities were treated as phenotypical and visible. At the same time, Charles’s joke was not incidental, for there was

a tendency within Seychellois *kreolite* to discard the history of movement and violence implied by phenotypical variation, and to present Seychelles as absolute, prior – the source of life. Before taking up this element of the history of Seychelles, I want to give an idea of what is implied by arborescence within national imaginaries, and what it means in the context of Afro-diasporic creolization.

It has been argued from a variety of historical and ethnographic examples that “people are often thought of, and think of themselves, as being rooted in place and as deriving their identity from that rootedness,” and that arborescent rootedness is of particular importance (Malkki 1992:27). One tendency in the literature has treated the commonness of this imagery as primarily a consequence of the physical structure of trees, which, because they are living and yet non-human, excite “the moral imagination concerning the health or disease of corporate bodies, bodies corporeal and bodies politic” (Fernandez 1998:85). Examples of this are widespread ethnographically and historically (Rival 1998), suggesting to anthropologists that trees are particularly good to think with (Bloch 1998). This reading is centred on the cognitive processes of human beings, for whom metaphor is a form of “concretisation” of complex, abstract concepts; analogical reasoning across domains of living things is both premised on a human ability to make classifications, and reinforces this classificatory hierarchy (Bloch 1998:52; Ellen 1988:221). Trees, within this framework, are simply one of a set of natural entities that can be used to generate metaphor.

Other analyses have subsequently considered arborescent imagery not simply as part of a broad process of cognition, but as possessing utility within nationalist imaginaries which depend on the territorial rooting of people in place (Malkki 1992:28). The dendritic, branching structure of trees “endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then

of the two that become four... Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5), and Deleuze and Guattari have argued that this binary tendency is a facet of Western knowledge production, visible in the structure of the book, the archive, genealogy and classification (ibid. 5-6, 15). The notion of genealogy structures citizenship, the relation between a nation-state and its people (Povinelli 2002:219), naturalising the idea of territory in ways both insidious and repressive (Malkki 1992:29). In this chapter, I will argue that arborescent nationalism in Seychelles must be understood in relation to the history of plantation, which combined taxonomic botanical knowledge with taxonomic racial knowledge in highly experimental ways.

However, roots language in Seychelles also draws on black diasporic thought that has been focused partly on the search for one root, and partly on a rhizomatic rethinking of the whole concept. The former tendency has been evident in *Négritude* and Pan-African thought, which have emphasised deracination from Africa through both academic and poetic expression (Césaire 1969:72). The latter tendency, based on Glissant's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, is an argument that this search for roots should be abandoned in favour of recognition of the relational, archipelagic nature of diasporic blackness (Glissant 1997:11). Deleuze and Guattari contrasted the hierarchy of the taproot and world-tree with the rhizome root system, a multiplicity which "establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (1987:7). For Glissant, such a structure emblematised what he referred to as "Relation," the real lesson of creolization and a condition visible throughout the islands of the Caribbean (Glissant 1997:33). Indeed, much of the literature of creolization is underwritten by this idea that Creole societies challenge the sedentarist logic of rootedness, providing opportunities to think in ways that are rhizomatic and counter-hegemonic (Malkki 1992:36).

Seychellois *kreolite* might be thought of as both taproot and rhizome – possibilities that, in any case, are both drawn from the same dialectical modernity and thus never fully occlude one another (Clarke 2000:21). Hierarchical, territorial rooting was obvious in Seychelles within the state’s relationship with the diaspora (via citizenship), the production of family trees, and the archival technologies used to this end. A rhizomatic conception of *kreolite* informed both the experience of Seychellois in London, and the ways that Seychellois identity was figured in relation to other black diasporas. But this was not unproblematic, nor did it prompt the abandonment of hierarchy; both tendencies, in drawing on a plantation history that was material and not merely metaphorical, retained troubling tendencies.

A history of planting

This section provides an overview of the interrelationship between botanical and racial knowledge in the history of Seychelles, suggesting that through taxonomic logic, the lives of people and plants in Seychelles became enmeshed. The character of nationalist arborescence is informed by two specific trees, which are both utilised to produce Creole objects.

The Seychelles islands have an apparently primeval verdance. The disorganised nature of the growth of plants, which seem to be matted together, jostling for space, blanketing buildings and hillsides and whole islands, is striking. This abundance of plant life has bolstered the idea of the islands as the “Garden of Eden.” General Charles Gordon speculated quite seriously as to “whether or not the Tree of Knowledge is not the *Lodoicea seychellarium* [coco de mer], and the Tree of Life the *Artocarpus incisa* [breadfruit]”

(Gordon 1885:78). Other outside observers have been content merely to treat the islands as Eden-like: timeless, natural and scarcely touched by man (Kothari and Wilkinson 2010:1406). Yet there are contradictions hidden in the mass of roots and leaves, and Seychelles is a garden in a more literal sense. Rather than being prehistoric, many of the species that flourish in Seychelles were introduced as part of the plantation; they have both been cultivated and, through their cultivation, reshaped the landscape.

The early colonists, drawn from the settlement at La Réunion, surveyed the land and established experimental spice gardens on Ste Anne and on Mahé (in the hills above Anse Royale) throughout the late 18th century; instrumental in this was the aptly named Pierre Poivre, who had similarly established spice plantations on Mauritius (Sauer 1967:18). The establishment of plants was the *raison d'être* of a colony intended to function partly as a victualling station, and to provide competition to Dutch plantation production. This necessitated the movement of both plant specimens and people into the islands: white (and sometimes South Asian) landowners, along with enslaved Africans to work the plantations. Species brought to Seychelles in this way include coffee, cotton, tobacco, rice, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, maize, manioc, cloves, nutmeg, pepper, banana and cinnamon (ibid. 17-18).

Race and planting intersected at an ideological as well as a material level. Both racial and botanical knowledge rely on underlying principles of taxonomy that are notably imperfect (De Queiroz 2007; Isaac, et al. 2004), having developed through visual appraisal and observation of biological difference, during an Enlightenment shaped by the colonial encounter. European colonists were tasked with disciplining this difference – whether plant, animal or human – through economic production (Wynter 1971:100), and the figure of the planter became highly valorised in Seychelles as a model of white masculinity. But

this racial knowledge, and this economic project, was highly unstable and experimental. In Seychelles, plants sometimes ‘escaped’ the confines of spice gardens – cinnamon quickly became naturalised throughout the existing forests in this way (Sauer 1967:19). Similarly, the increasing numbers of enslaved Africans imported into the islands increased the likelihood that they would attempt, and succeed in, *marronage* (ibid.).

The endemic fruiting trees of Seychelles are palms, a species that troubles categories. Though they are not taxonomically considered trees at all, they have branches, trunks and roots, and are visually placed within the scope of the folk category “tree” (Ellen 1998:59). Here, I single out two palms that sturture *kreolite* in important ways: the coconut palm, which has a prosaic kind of importance based on its possible uses; and the *coco de mer*, which is valued in primarily symbolic ways.

During the colonisation of the islands, the coconut palm was found naturally in groves fringing the coasts (Sauer 1967:16), but it quickly became incorporated into the plantation system. This systematic cultivation, based on the subsistence needs of the population as well as copra processing for export, assumed huge economic importance when the cotton markets began to collapse in the 19th century, and quickly became necessary for the continued survival of Seychelles and Seychellois. The economic depressions of the 20th century were felt so severely in part because coconut palms had worsened the quality of the soil (Kothari and Wilkinson 2013:97) whilst proving vulnerable to pests. Yet the coconut has remained important both at the day-to-day level of consumption and to the arts, and tourist industry.

“The coconut is good,” several interlocutors told me (in tones both platitudinous and sincere), “from the roots to the leaves.” Coconuts are consumed in a variety of ways: their water (*delo koko*), their flesh, whether as *koko tan* (the sweet, mild jelly of a young

coconut), *koko zem* (the crisp, foamy-textured inside of a germinating nut), or (when grated, mixed with water and strained) as coconut milk. The shells, copra (which, processed, yields oil), husks, leaves (*koko fey*), and fibre are all utilised for various purposes, both practical and artistic. Most highly-prized is the palmiste, the palm's "heart" or terminal bud, which can be sliced and eaten as "millionaire's salad." My relatives cooked with locally produced coconut oil and kept a bag of the milk in the freezer. Later in fieldwork, when I visited Rayna and Mervyn in the South of Mahé, they devoted part of their Sunday to cutting young coconuts from trees they had been carefully monitoring throughout the week. "You see?" Mervyn remarked approvingly to Rayna. "Mairi's really in the roots now!" He went about finding the best way to cut the heart of the palm out with his machete while leaving the tree intact and alive; while he did this, Rayna would idly weave a leaf into a little ball of the sort she said she had played with as a child.

The roots and leaves are woven into the tourist industry. The musician Achille Luc performed a weekly 'coconut show' at a luxury hotel, where he taught guests how to grate the flesh on an old-fashioned bench. Artisans at the Craft Village fashioned sheets of coconut fibre into hats and baskets. SHF's Heritage Clubs taught children how to weave *koko fey* into toys and whistles. *Koko fey* were also incorporated into traditional ideas of romance through the weaving of *kapatya* baskets, a courtship custom considered to have been widespread in old Seychelles.¹¹ Interlocutors working in national heritage explained to me that a young man who was interested in a woman would weave a basket from palm leaves and take it to her family home as a gift; this symbolised his ability to provide for her in the future. This image is presented to tourists as an ongoing practice, but is always

¹¹ This period is explored more fully in Chapter 3, along with "traditional" weddings and their importance to the nonspecific past.

situated in a vague past connected only tenuously to the present, and is often as romantic and alien to Seychellois as to foreigners.

Coconut palms were regarded with affection, as though they were analogous to people (c.f. Giambelli 1998), but this was via metaphor and simile rather than simple equivalence. Some interlocutors were aware that the first fruit is produced in six to ten years, and that the tree reaches full maturity at between fifteen and twenty years, and made the comparison with a human lifespan and life course. The gender of coconut palms was a basis for lewd joking. The coconut palm is monoecious (having both male and female flowers on the same plant), and some species are polygamonoecious (in addition to male and female, also having bisexual flowers on the plant). When interlocutors shared this fact with me, they glossed the tree as “hermaphrodite,” a term that (when applied to a person) carried a note of suspicion and horror. Gender therefore represented one limit of the metaphorical potential of the coconut.



Figure 4. The coat of arms of Seychelles, depicting a *coco de mer* palm and giant tortoise (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons).

The *coco de mer* palm, in contrast, was gendered in a more recognisably human way, and this contributed to its symbolic power in the context of the nation. The palm is endemic to Seychelles and produces a large bi-lobed nut with a distinctive appearance – it is considered to resemble a pudendum, or else a pair of (female) buttocks, and one of its names is *coco fesse* (“rump coco”). For several centuries, *coco de mer* nuts were dispersed across the Indian Ocean and its littoral by flotation, and this method of dispersal created the impression that the nut was *of* the sea, originating from a single, magical tree beneath the waves, somewhere in the vicinity of the Maldives (Sauer 1967:16).¹² Believed, due to their appearance, to have aphrodisiac powers, the nuts commanded high prices in royal courts across the Eurasian landmass.

¹² General Gordon referred to the *coco de mer* as *Lodoicea seychellarium* rather than *Lodoicea maldivica*. There is a contemporary contingent of Seychellois who do the same, and who remain irritated that the initial association with the Maldives should have resulted in this misnaming.



Figure 5. (top): *coco de mer* palm, Botanical Gardens (Mahé). Figure 6. bottom): *coco de mer* nut, Fond Ferdinand (Praslin). Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

The settlement of Seychelles, accompanied by the discovery that the palms grew in profusion on the islands of Curieuse and Praslin (especially in the area now allotted to the Vallee de Mai and Fond Ferdinand nature reserves), diminished the economic value of the nut. While the flesh inside it is edible, the *coco de mer*, unlike the coconut, was not suited to plantation-scale cultivation. In part, this was due to uncertainty about the mechanisms of the plant’s reproduction (Blackmore, et al. 2012:5). Unlike the coconut palm it is

dioecious (plants are either male or female) and can only be sexed once it has begun to produce flowers (at between eleven and forty-five years old). The male inflorescence is long and catkin-shaped, and straightforwardly resembles a penis. This resemblance, viewed through the prism of botanical uncertainty, gave rise to a folk theory that is still repeated in the context of joking with tourists. “One tree is male,” Achille Luc told the audience at the coconut show, “and one is female. When the wind blows” (bringing his fingers together and intertwining them) “they make babies.” There is an old belief that the trees uproot themselves to engage in this act, and that any human being who witnesses it will die or go blind.

The qualities that made the *coco de mer* unsuitable for plantation cultivation make it a site of symbolic production, representative of the nation. The maleness of the tree has been eclipsed by the fact that the nut is so large and striking, meaning that the *coco de mer* as a species is ascribed an inherent femininity (separate from the sex of individual trees). The nut is pictured through postcards, brochures and other widely-circulated visual media intended to represent the islands within a global tourist imaginary. It is frequently a subject of visual artworks produced for the tourist market. Through this range of depictions, it overlaps with sexualised representations of black women’s bodies: Seychellois beauty queens, pageant contestants, bikini models, and pop singers are often photographed in suggestive poses with the nut. The tree has come metonymically to stand for female sexuality, and this female sexuality has become emblematic of the islands themselves, gendering them as feminine for consumption by outsiders.

There are two salient features of this imagery. Firstly, it draws on older representations of imperial island possessions as exotic, feminised and subject to ownership by more powerful, ‘masculine’ nations (Hay 2006:21). Secondly, the value of

these representations is definitively economic; it has both economic origins, and economic consequences in terms of how the nation is imagined and marketed. While such imagery is common to both nationalist imaginaries and tourist economies, the fact that a tree embodies these qualities highlights an ongoing tension between nature and cultivation, and the ways that they are linked to place. *Coco de mer* trees and nuts, because of their value, are managed in highly circumscribed ways: the nuts are sold for around 5000 SCR each (approximately £287¹³) by licensed vendors and various documents accompany their movement out of the country. Any *coco de mer* palm that grows on private land must be registered with the Seychelles government, and its yield is strictly monitored. The *coco de mer* is part of questions surrounding Intellectual Property and ownership (which will be explored more fully in Chapter 2); while ‘selling sex’ via the plant was perfectly palatable to my interlocutors, I witnessed the outrage of several arts and heritage practitioners upon discovering a British-owned, upmarket purveyor of sex toys and marital aids called Coco de Mer. In asking a representative from the World Intellectual Property Organization what legal recourse was open to Seychellois, these practitioners foregrounded the need to protect the *coco de mer* via geographical indicator.

Island-born

Arborescence is useful to nation-states insofar as it roots a particular people in a particular place, mapping the ideological boundaries of the nation onto physical space. This section explores how being born in the islands was centred as a source of *kreolite*, and what the implications of this were for members of the diaspora in London.

¹³ All amounts given in British pounds reflect exchange rates in December 2018, and are approximations; at the time of fieldwork, they would have been slightly lower due to fluctuations in the pound.

In April of 2016, Auntie Vivian visited from the USA in order to research a magazine feature on Creole culture, and asked for my assistance. One overcast Sunday afternoon, she picked me up and drove me to a fishing contest organised by one of the local fisheries. I had imagined a stream of pirogues bearing straw-hatted fishermen, but instead, one by one, yachts docked in the harbour and deposited huge snappers and sharks into plastic crates and onto a weighing scale. Vivian had been planning to solicit soundbites from attendees in response to the question, “Why do you love being Creole?” Given the predominance of British and Russian expats in the crowd, it was frustrating that there were so few people to whom this question could be addressed. Vivian carefully selected respondents who *appeared* Creole (an idea that will be interrogated further in the next section of this chapter), eventually settling on a mother and daughter who were light-skinned, but not white, of mixed ethnic appearance. They transpired to be Mauritian, visiting Seychelles for only a few days, but obligingly answered the question. Their answer was satisfyingly relational; since the world was globalizing, they explained, Creole was “the future.”

For want of other respondents who met the (implicit yet obvious) aesthetic requirements that formed the basis of our own definition of “Creole”, we spoke to the two young Seychellois mixologists at the rum bar. One man told me that “being Creole means you are born on an island. It’s different from the city.”

Both soundbites were delivered within a highly particular sphere of promotional tourist-directed activity, but their relevance cannot be discounted on these grounds, as state *kreolite* is produced within just such a milieu. The definition provided by the two women echoed state discourses that utilised the language of globalization, modernity and mixing. It was thus potentially able to include anyone. The young man’s formulation

echoed the original definition of the word 'Creole' (see Maps and Traces) and the importance of *place*; the fact of being island-born as the basis for inclusion (Mintz and Price 1985:6). This latter idea of *kreolite* can be conceptualised as the collective inheritance of Seychellois, but not of all people generally, and may be denied even to members of the diaspora. The tension between the idea that creolization is a process, and that to be Creole is to be a specific kind of person, was apparent in the experiences of the diaspora.

Vergès's contention that to be Creole is to have the experience of being foreign everywhere (2010:149) is an elegant formulation of what is, in practice, a difficult predicament. The plantation relied on processes of deracination, dispersal and transplanting that rendered Creole identities readily mobile (Freeman 2002). For Seychellois in the islands, this mobility can be treated as historical rather than ongoing. For Seychellois in the diaspora – dispersed, seed-like, by air and water – the historical uprooting of chattel slavery is compounded by transnational migration. This was reflected in attitudes towards "Kenya-borns" (see **Archipelago**) in Seychelles, as well as by experiences of the London diaspora.

Suspicion of Kenya-borns was common in Seychelles, where they were frequently figured as too African or too European, as overstepping boundaries by becoming involved in Seychellois politics. One evening, after attending a public lecture, I was discussing historical migration to East Africa with a group of interlocutors working in culture. One woman spoke with authoritative ease on the subject, prompting me to ask whether her own family had been part of this phenomenon. Her expression changed entirely, and I was conscious that I had been rude. "No," she said, drawing herself up. "And thank God – because I have roots!" It is notable that the otherness of Kenya-borns is conceptualised in terms of their

place of birth. The fact of being born elsewhere – even if one subsequently returned, as such families often did – disrupted a sense of continuity with the islands.

Meanwhile, many of my London-based interlocutors had been born in Seychelles, but just as many were born in the UK, East Africa or elsewhere to Seychellois parents. While this latter group self-identified as Seychellois, they sometimes wondered aloud whether they were Seychellois “enough” to be involved in the project. Philomena, a half-Italian Seychellois woman born in Italy and living in London, had doubts. Her Seychellois mother had “become” Italian since living there; she only cooked Italian food, they spoke Italian to one another, and the expression of being Seychellois was limited to observing the ritual of afternoon tea and the consumption of foods like *ladob* (root vegetables stewed in coconut milk) and *galet* (hard cassava bread).

“I think there is something about our culture,” she said of Seychelles. “It is not strong enough. So it easily becomes overwhelmed by another culture.”

Philomena, notably, did not identify as black. Being black was not a foregone conclusion for London-based interlocutors, as it depended so much on the interaction between how one was identified by outsiders, and subtler, more internal experiential dimensions. Often the reluctance to identify as black was more evident among older interlocutors, though I could not be certain whether this was demographic (a product of the flight of the *grann blan*) or simply part of a general shift in attitude since the 1970s. But for those who did consider themselves black, there was an alternative landscape in which they could be rooted: a global Afro-diasporic culture, influenced by Atlantic and Caribbean experiences, reggae and Rastafarianism.

Younger informants in particular described formative friendships with Caribbean-descended Londoners and the sharing of pop culture, food and sociality. For Jed Alphonse,

a young DJ who was born in Seychelles and had lived for much of his life in West London, being able to place his Seychellois experience within this broader context was personally and professionally sustaining. He frequently participated in events run by a Francophone Caribbean collective, Zil'oKA. Their October 2015 *Joune Kreyol* (Creole Day) celebration took place in a school function hall in South London. There was a market purveying chilli sauces, hair products, shea butter soaps and bright wax-cloth accessories; in the cafeteria, yellow patties and fragrant fish curries were served up in polystyrene trays; at the bar, punch was liberally dispensed. Everywhere, attendees and performers were dressed in their best checked madras clothes, and women and small girls wore white flounced petticoats (known in parts of the Caribbean as 'slave skirts'). Throughout the day, a series of acts took to the stage. A troupe of young men did a hip-hop dance, while Zil'oKA's own troupe performed traditional Martinican dances to live drums. A sharply-dressed Jamaican lawyer delivered a motivational speech about his career trajectory and the recognition of black excellence, and was followed by a Kreyol-speaking scholar's lecture on Creole history. The musician S.Rise, from Guadeloupe, performed a set of his own songs, punctuated by cries of "Pop-pop!" and "Do we have any Creole people in the house? Do we have any black people in the house?" that drew enthusiastic responses from the crowd. The response was slightly more muted when a Seychellois singer (who had been invited by Jed to perform) took to the stage. Jed was disappointed, but empathetic. "I think the people from Guadeloupe and Martinique want to hear their own music," he said, recognising that these were larger, more cohesive diasporas. This influenced his DJ set later that night – he played Afrobeat tracks by artists like Fuse ODG and D'Banj, and Martinican *zouk*, but was reluctant to mix in Seychellois genres like *sega* and *moutya* in case they were not to the taste of the audience. Nonetheless, it was Zil'oKA who had first heard him playing at another bar and invited him to perform, and their members continued to support his

endeavours. These events were constructed around the mutual support that members of the African diaspora should show one another in recognition of shared history of uprooting. Even if the space for Seychelles within this was constrained by the tastes of the broader community, it fortified Seychellois *kreolite* against being subsumed by white Britishness.

It is worth noting here that this community was generated through an explicit recognition of a shared history of slavery, of displacement as violent, and of racism as a real obstacle to happiness. This will be taken up more explicitly in the next section, which addresses how the state in Seychelles deals with these factors. For now, it is sufficient to recognise that this history contributes to a sense of being Creole in a de-territorialised, transnational sense; if being Creole calls territory into question (Vergès 2010:149), it is perhaps through the active work of questioning, rather than as a matter of course.



Figure 7. (top): dancers from the Zi'l'oKA troupe. Figure 8. (bottom): dancers from the Notting Hill Carnival troupe. Photographs by Mairi O'Gorman (2015).

Seychellois born abroad, regardless of the ambiguity of their position, could still relate to the islands through a firmly territorialized idea of citizenship – in fact, the logic of the modern order of nation-states demanded that they do so. Some London-based interlocutors, depending on when and where they had been born, had already held citizenship prior to leaving the islands. Parents often swiftly arranged citizenship for children born in the UK, in order to facilitate family trips to Seychelles. At the time of writing, citizenship is potentially accessible to anyone who has been resident in Seychelles for over five years, or married to a citizen for over ten years, but non-residents can also claim via parental descent (and do not have to renounce any other citizenship in the process). Claiming as an adult was fraught, as there was a common perception that one's application could be refused for trivial personal or political reasons. It was difficult to judge whether there was a factual basis for these fears. In practice, descendants of the opposition sometimes found it straightforward to become citizens even if they did not reside in Seychelles, while foreign-born spouses of Seychellois, resident in the islands, might be forced to wait decades. In general, it appeared simpler to *prove* that one was Seychellois than to make a bid to *become* Seychellois.

While claiming on the basis of descent still entailed passing a citizenship examination, applicants needed to provide documentation concerning their parents and grandparents. As Philomena had put it, "I can claim my citizenship, but I have to prove I'm related to *her*." She indicated her mother, who was sitting on the couch with Philomena's baby in her lap. What this meant, in practice, was that one was able to produce genealogical information from the National Archives in order to back up a claim. It was almost always necessary to physically visit the islands, and to prove that – if one were not island-born – one was situated within a genealogy of island-born people. In other words,

A simplified family tree could be obtained from the National Archives in Victoria. While it might have been possible to find this information independently, none of my interlocutors had done so; if someone had gone to the trouble of researching their ancestry, it had always been in person and physically on the premises of the archives at the National Cultural Centre (NCC). Visitors could pay a fee of SCR350 (approximately £20) in order to undertake this research, or SCR500 (approximately £29) to have it carried out by staff. During my time in Seychelles, the National Archives operated in a drastically reduced manner because the building was being treated for a fungal infestation. Both the Archives and the National Library, also based at the NCC, had been subject to intermittent closures over a period of years, but other parts of the building – the National Gallery, the offices of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the former National Assembly hall – were still in frequent use. When the archives reopened in September 2016, the materials had been moved, variously packed, stored and unpacked, so that only staff were allowed direct access to them and independent research was not possible.



Figure 10. Graffiti-ed cacti outside the NCC and the Carrefour des Arts. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

While the archive provided information necessary for historical research generally, it was conceptualised by my interlocutors as the place that one went to find out about one’s family. For the Seychellois diaspora, paying to have a family tree drawn up could form the basis of a claim for citizenship, but this was far from the only reason for seeking out such information. Seychellois citizens and those who had dwelt in the islands their whole lives also engaged with archival materials, sometimes with the intention of making other kinds of legal claims – proof of descent from a particular family could be followed up with research in the land registry that would connect an individual to a property.

Motivations for undertaking historical research could be more nuanced and personal. Vania was a citizen who had come of age in the immediate post-coup era, and had lived abroad for many years before returning to Seychelles. I accompanied her on a trip to the archives, in October 2016, when they had partially re-opened. One female employee offered to search the stacks for us – it transpired that she had married into a branch of Vania’s family, and much of the conversation was taken up with warmly reaffirming the exact nature of this connection. When this was over, Vania made her inquiry; she knew that she was related to one of the *grann blan* families on her father’s side, but wanted to understand how. This information would bring her no explicit financial or material advantage. She was simply interested in the relationship.

Filiation may represent a personal connection, but it is also concerned with power. This had ramifications for the kind of family history that could be produced and, by extension, for the production of history more generally. Archives are “cultural artefacts of fact production, of taxonomies in the making, and of disparate notions of what made up colonial authority” (Stoler 2002:91), and genealogy is one idiom of authority. Povinelli has highlighted that genealogies among the aristocracy were originally concerned with locating individuals by rank as much as linking them through filiation, and this tendency is reproduced in humbler family trees. She posed the question:

What could—and should—be the presuppositional grounds for forming these petite genealogies if not the social or religious status of the contracting members? Who should be included and excluded from the ranks of blood and money, property and inheritance, love and affection, and sex? (2002:219)

In Seychelles, as in other postcolonial settings, the answer to this question is at least somewhat about race. Specifically, it is about race as it was produced by the plantation and hence the authority of the plantocracy, the *grann blan* class. In family trees, dendritic lines of European, Asian and African “influence” can be traced through births and marriages into

the present day, but European ancestral connections are privileged by the very form of the archive. The preponderance of land deeds, marriage certificates, birth and death certificates and other ephemera related to European or European-descended ancestors meant that it was often easier to fill in the details of their lives and that the materials related to them were consequently more evocative. The fact that these lives had been, in the past, dignified by legal recognition of various kinds, bore fruit in their present-day treatment. Even outside the archive – at other historical sites, on television, and as part of the education of children – descriptions of everyday life for the *grann blan* were often presented as representative of Seychellois generally. The process of relating was compounded by relatedness, as *grann blan* families were invariably enmeshed with poorer families and with enslaved persons through marriage, de facto unions, love affairs, rape and the birth of children. The fact that not all white habitants had been noblemen or landowners, and that they had been engaged in intimacies of varying degrees of violence with the non-white majority, was concealed through a fixation on records as a form. Genealogies cannot speak of intimacy – only of hierarchy (Povinelli 2002:227).

At the same time, though the *grann blan* assumed a kind of metonymic function in regards to Seychellois *kreolite* – standing for everyone else within this genealogical imaginary – the roots of the family tree have rhizomatic qualities. The dubious legality of many historic Seychellois marriages and the commonness of de facto unions (living “*en menage*”) has meant that inclusion within a family tree is more important than any kind of essentialised legitimacy. This has been particularly evident in the construction of the categories ‘white’ and ‘Creole.’ I understood the category ‘white’ as highly flexible, contingent on both visual appraisals and personal identification. In contrast to the London context, where a black-white binary and the very public nature of racism meant that Seychellois were either forced to choose an identity or have one imposed upon them, race

in Seychelles was subtle and relational. Individuals could be whitened through a perceived resemblance to white family members or ancestors, but also as a consequence of the application of rough phenotypical taxonomies to the reality of near-infinite physical variation. Some members of my own family were considered white because they had light eyes and loosely-curly hair, and some were re-appraised as having these characteristics by interlocutors who had met me. In common with some other Afro-diasporic contexts racial ambiguity was seen as quintessentially Seychellois, though the main points of reference were whiteness and blackness, and there was not an abundance of other racial categories (Edmonds 2010:125). This is why Auntie Vivian was able to identify potential Creole subjects visually; because they looked like they could potentially belong to several categories.

African heritage is an implicit presence within the archives; imaginatively, the records of the slave past and those diagramming filiation are kept separate, as enfranchisement in the institution of property (to be explored further in Chapter 2) was ultimately the basis of interest in the archives even if it was not used to make particular claims. This does not mean that the slave past was devoid of interest for my interlocutors, or excluded entirely from state *kreolite*, as the next section will make clear. But it was much more difficult to integrate within the textual past that formed one of the pillars of state authority, because textual evidence implicated the *grann blan* class in the “crime” of slavery (Vergès 1999:15). The default position of those in heritage was either to emphasise the absence of “evidence” (which I understood to be textual evidence) for the lives of enslaved people, or to couch this history in language that would not imply blame. Jean-Claude Mahoune described to me a recent occasion when he had been asked to deliver a lecture to students from *L’École Française* in Victoria. Anticipating a group of young white people, he had prepared a talk about the history of Seychelles that would not upset the

descendants of planters by assigning blame for the institution of slavery. When the students arrived, he was surprised to see that the majority were black (something that he attributed to the social mobility enabled by the *koudeta*) and that his caution had been misplaced.

Where the slave past had been absorbed into the mainstream of historical discourse, it prompted discomfort. A female interlocutor in education expressed disappointment that the national heritage site of Venn's Town (or Mission Lodge) – a former Anglican school for the children of Liberated Africans – was neglected by locals, who preferred to visit the viewpoint adjacent to it. She remarked that their own ancestors might have been educated at the school, and buried in the nearby cemetery, but it seemed not to matter at all. "They don't even want to know the name." In Chapter 3, I will describe some historical sites associated with slavery that were popular with visitors, and which could be integrated into popular history; but this example highlights the extent to which slavery was problematic at a genealogical level.

It was just this sort of knowledge that archives occluded through an emphasis on European ancestry, European names. Archival ways of knowing the past have conflated whiteness, the written word, and history, so that even when evidence of African- and slave-derived histories is present, it is characterised as comparatively scarce or tenuous. However, the *koudeta*, during which Jean-Claude Mahoune and so many others had come of age and been conscripted into building the nation, had prompted a revaluation of African ancestry. The SPPF's restructuring of the education system and the institution of a National Youth Service had cultivated a connection with the African past, often through theatre, the arts, poetry and song – imaginative forms that drew on the Kreol language. Through the tap-root of language, it was possible to think of *kreolite* as textual.

*Lalang perdi*¹⁴

This section will argue that the formalization of Kreol has rendered the African past more textual, and hence been part of a standardization of *kreolite* more generally. The history of Kreol Seselwa is, like that of other Creole forms, one of contestation (Hintzen 2002:108); integrating it into the idea of the nation has entailed a standardization that conceals this fact.

Kreol Seselwa is derived from French (of a sort that was probably heavily influenced by the Breton origins of many colonists), but incorporates loan-words from English and several African languages (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009:228-9), and is markedly influenced by Malagasy (Choppy 2013:33; Durup 2013:42). While the Seychelles islands were under French rule, the language was considered a dialect, and was shaped by the experiences and inventiveness of enslaved Africans. It thus provides a link to the African past that is nonetheless distinctively Seychellois.

After the Treaty of Paris, the British tried to curtail its use, and this was especially evident in educational institutions, which retained these standards well into the 20th century. Tony Mathiot remembered that during his time at Seychelles College, during the 1970s, boys were punished for use of their native language.

"It was an abomination to speak Kreol. Our English teacher, the priest rather, from the Christian Brothers of Instruction, he gave us a whole one hour lecture on why we should not speak Kreol on this compound. He said, 'Here we are, within the embrace of Seychelles College, where the divine instruction of us who have sacrificed our homeland to come to your pitiful little island in the sun, full of mosquitoes, sweat...', whatever, all the... [waving a hand] 'We are hired to give you a good instruction, give you a whole, much more landscape of life ahead of you. Take the opportunity to learn, French, English, Latin even - but don't dare sully, blemish' - uses a whole lot of synonyms, one after the other - and then sometimes he uses a word with the same alphabet and he tells you to notice the alliteration - those guys had a way of saying things! He spells it out for you, you know, so many adjectives, that you blemish, [banging the table rhythmically with each word] cursed, like a

¹⁴ "Lost language"

malediction to his school to speak 'your - *your* - Kreol language in my school!' And then he will mete out the punishment, and he will say, 'Doesn't the punishment fit the crime?' and you will say, 'Yes, Father.' And then there was solitary confinement, there was Saturday detention..."

Often they were made to endure a punishment familiar from other colonial contexts:

wearing a sign that said, "I must not speak Kreol in the classroom", or carrying a specially carved wooden baton that bore the school motto. The baton was not only physical evidence that a boy had spoken Kreol; he could only rid himself of it by passing it to another boy whom he overheard doing the same thing.

In the post-Independence era, the ruling party made efforts to recognise Kreol as a language rather than a dialect or corruption of French. After the *koudeta*, the new SPPF government under France-Albert René instituted widespread educational changes (including the introduction of a National Youth Service, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5). In 1982, Kreol was formally adopted as a language of instruction in schools. This status was accompanied by greater emphasis on the written representation of what had hitherto been a spoken language, and the codification of grammatical rules and structures. *Lenstiti Kreol*, now a pivotal institution in cultural research in Seychelles, was originally founded with the aim of creating educational resources to teach these rules, and this combination of the production of a Creole corpus of literature – the recording of oral histories, folktales, and songs – alongside the codification of the language was typical of the new nation's engagement with Kreol. The principles underlying the production of an orthography have a genealogical character (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:5): selection, refinement, and parsimony; the careful mapping of relationships and lines of descent. These principles were also applied to the collection and systematization of hitherto unrecorded cultural expressions. In the same way that family trees cannot represent love or intimacy (Povinelli 2002:227), the grammaticization of spoken and Creole languages cannot accommodate the full spectrum of how those languages are used, for "the root is

monolingual” (Glissant 1997:15). The fact that Kreol was produced in the context of mobility and migration is at odds with this rooting.

For members of the diaspora, Kreol was a link to their own pasts as well as to the historical past; it was both a source of comfort, and fraught with questions about how Seychellois one was. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Seychellois returning to the islands had been able to produce a few words of the language (in the form of small-talk) to ease movement through passport control, pay cheaper resident’s rates on the inter-island ferry, and avoid being bamboozled while haggling at the market. Kreol-speaking had thus functioned as a kind of alternative passport. This era had come to an end with the introduction of stricter citizenship regimes, but members of the diaspora were still supposed to speak Kreol as often as possible. Interlocutors in both London and Seychelles seemed relieved, if they met my mother, to hear her speak Kreol fluently. “Because you know what the worst thing is that you can say to a Seychellois?” one woman told me. “That you *forgot*.”

However, the experience of migration had produced variations in the language that complicated the process of recognition by other Seychellois. Clifford, born in East Africa in the mid-20th century, told me that the Creole of the Kenya-borns was primmer and comparatively old-fashioned, and that this tendency had endured. When members of his extended East African Seychellois family visited him in Victoria, he spoke to them in English, feeling self-conscious about how their accents and mores would appear to others.

For London-dwelling interlocutors, a similar process was taking place. Vanessa, a woman in her late 20s who was brought up in East London, visited Seychelles regularly and told me that it was important to her that her young children had contact with their heritage. It was somewhat sheepishly that she admitted that she did not speak Kreol,

despite understanding it – “You try, obviously. But people make fun of your accent, so you stop.” Her younger brother, Shane, had relocated to Seychelles. Upon meeting him in Victoria, and discovering he had been working for the airport for several years, I asked if he spoke Kreol. To my surprise, he echoed what his sister had told me. “People said they couldn’t understand my accent, so I stopped trying. Now they speak to me in Kreol and I answer them in English.” Jed, meanwhile, had experienced taxi fares doubling or tripling as soon as he opened his mouth and the driver heard his faintly-English accent.

Meanwhile, the shift from spoken to written Kreol was a point of pride for Seychellois in the islands, but also created new kinds of disjuncture because a language common to everyone could now be assessed in terms of correct usage. In designing a survey for Seychelles Heritage Foundation, with the aim of asking children about their experiences of after-school Heritage Clubs, I asked colleagues to check how I had translated it into Kreol. Two colleagues were middle-aged and had been part of the first intake of NYS students; they were not only happy to help, but enjoyed debating the finer points of grammar. A younger colleague (in her twenties) confided, with some embarrassment, that she could not read and write Kreol. Like many other young Seychellois, she used written Kreol on social media (especially Facebook); she was simply concerned that this was not proper usage.

Kreol was originally produced through deviations from conventional language use – deviations that were often both highly creative, and necessary for the survival of enslaved people and their descendants. In contrast to linear, orthographic logic, Creole languages developed in a way that “has no “natural” continuity [...] but, rather, bursts forth in snatches and fragments”; a tendency that Glissant located in the oppressive structures of the plantation and the necessity of communicating while leaving certain facts unspoken

(1997:68-9). The production of a Kreol grammar meant restricting this tendency towards invention and elaboration and, at the same time, laid state language specialists open to charges of inconsistency or tyranny.

During my fieldwork, an old controversy about the use of Kreol within education erupted anew. Since the 1980s, critics have argued that using Kreol as a primary language of instruction for younger age cohorts further disadvantages already-marginalised children (Fleischmann Schwarz 2017:3). The question of the importance of Kreol grammar was being re-litigated by a variety of experts in language and culture. James Mancham, former president, wrote to *The Nation* in response to an article by James Michel (then incumbent president):

Over recent weeks, I have been somewhat bothered by an article which *Seychelles NATION* published in an endeavour to glorify the Kreol language as opposed to la langue Creole which carried the headline – ‘Si ou perdi ou lalang maternel, ou osi ou perdi’ (Meaning “If you lose your maternal language, you also lose yourself”).

(Mancham 2016)

Mancham positioned himself against “Kreol with a capital ‘K’”, designating the former “a bureaucratically-produced Kreol grammar” that bore the hallmark of the “One-Party State.” He contrasted this masculine, phonetically rendered tongue unfavourably with the soft, maternal poetry of a properly French Creole. This was part of a lengthy back-and-forth of letters across several newspapers, with both practitioners in cultural heritage and education, as well as laypeople, outlining their views. In agreement with Mancham’s position, Timothe Volcère argued

English is certainly the most important international language of business and politics. The French language is reputed for having a special cultural dimension. How lucky for us Seychellois to have been able to benefit by our awareness and knowledge of these two great languages [...]

Like Mr Mancham says “We must aim to get to Monaco not Bamako!”

(Volcère 2016)

This argument seemed to rely on the idea that Kreol was simultaneously too grammatical, and not grammatical enough. Implicit in the movement against Kreol in classrooms was the idea that SPUP had purposely militarised and masculinised a formerly-feminine mother tongue; perhaps even that the act of standardising was underwritten by a militant logic. At the same time, the African aspects of Kreol were treated as particularly troubling by the state's critics, as if to acknowledge African antecedents meant absorption into a perceived continental underdevelopment. As well as being an argument about usage, it was also about filiation and descent; the extent to which Africa could be represented within the national family tree.

The slippage between "Creole" and "African" was not simply a misrepresentation of the state's position by critics of Kreol language education, but was of fundamental importance for the project of *kreolite*. If the Creole language has an "internal obligation: to renew itself in every instance on the basis of a series of forgettings" (Glissant 1997:69), in Seychelles, this process of renewal and forgetting is visible through imaginative engagements with the African past.

The archivists

The genealogical underpinnings of state *kreolite* have an impact beyond state records and language policy. The line between archival and artistic practice is blurred through imaginative exploration of the past by male artists who are treated as "archivists," whose work articulates dimensions that would otherwise be missing from official histories. At the same time, the genealogical and the grammatical shape how they express these ideas.

Interlocutors in heritage frequently spoke of a lack of evidence of the slave past, which I have so far explained in terms of a lack of archival documentation. However, it is

also important that in making this claim, interlocutors were emphasising the ephemeral quality of forms that were positively associated with the African past, such as storytelling, dance and theatre. All of these forms had been the focus of the Kreol revival during the SPPF era; in the present day, they have been enfolded into the idea of “intangible cultural heritage.” However, protecting these intangible expressions in Seychelles has not only meant preserving the knowledge of heritage bearers or transmitting particular techniques. In practice, preserving this knowledge has entailed the recreation and restoration of objects.

The Ministry’s National Heritage Division had, in the recent past, engaged in the recreation of heritage artefacts. Under the direction of then C.E.O. Gabriel Essack, artisans with knowledge of traditional construction and craft techniques had been enlisted to carry out this work. Essack, who had studied Anthropology before entering the Ministry of Culture, had interviewed “elders” from various districts about traditional mechanisms, such as cinnamon stills, musical instruments, and other functional objects. Essack would sketch the object, refining it according to his informant’s advice, until it looked as it ought; he would then show this sketch to the craftsman, who would find various ways of rendering it functional. The original informant would consult on this process too, until a working prototype could be produced. In these encounters, it was not only knowledge that was figured as heritage, but the objects themselves, as they could be incorporated into historical sites and museums; knowledge and object were “intimately conjoined” (Kurin 2004:70).

I heard the term “archivist” used to describe the work of visual artists very early on in fieldwork, while interviewing Egbert Marday about his paintings and assemblages. I describe Marday’s work more fully in Chapter 5; in the context of this chapter, it is

important that he has often depicted domestic scenes reminiscent of his own youth, as well as tableaux from the history of slavery (particularly through the life of the maroon slave, Pompée). He explicitly identified his work, whether it dealt with the domestic or the political, as having an archival quality. This term came up again during an interview with Martin Kennedy, of ARTerial Network (an artist's association). He was attempting to draw a line between art and craft in Seychelles, and spoke of the kiosk-based artisans who produced tchotchkes for tourist consumption, using weaving and macramé and carving. I pointed out that Marday, too, carved.

Kennedy thought for a moment and said, "But he's more of a sort of *archivist*."

I do not know whether Kennedy, who was influential within art in Seychelles through both his own work and his writing, was responsible for the term's popularity, but I began to notice how frequently it was used. Leon Radegonde, perhaps the most famous of Seychellois artists, works on memory through a variety of media: eerie layered palimpsests of half-visible faces; pseudo-African masks and icons created with found objects. Like Marday, he is part of a coterie of artists who learned to paint as boys, in the 1960s, before art was part of the school curriculum and prior to the restructuring of education in the 1970s that gave art a more official presence. These boys would visit a group of European expat women who gathered in Camion Hall to paint watercolours – an experience that was almost antithetical to the revolutionary, militarised engagement with the arts that took place within the National Youth Service (see Chapter 5, *Lazenes*). And yet, because this group of men stayed in Seychelles to build the nation, and because their personal lives formed a link with the world as it had been before Independence, this experience – being taught by women, at the margins of education, unrecognised by the state – was part of their mythos.

The term 'archivist' was highly gendered; I never heard it used to describe female artists, regardless of method or media. The vast majority of 'craft' artisans in Seychelles were female, characterised by one male artist as "women who fry a little bit of breadfruit and sell it at the side of the road" for little money. Yet it was not simply the case that men used craft techniques to create art, and women did not. Christine Chetty-Payet's work is primarily textile-based, using traditional materials and techniques to address ideas of African womanhood, and the position of Seychellois women in relation to continental African history – but she was not designated an archivist.

The masculinity of the archivist seemed to be tied to a capacity for invention and elaboration beyond the purely factual – a kind of intellectual "errantry" and thus a "desire to go against the root" (Glissant 1997:15) even while working within the constraints of a state genealogy. This was evident outside visual art too - musician Keven Valentin played music from various traditional Seychellois genres, and often did so on a drum that was not a *djembe* or *tanbour moutya*, but one that he had designed and constructed himself. He had done this according to his own specifications, his own awareness of the sound that the drum needed to produce. Achille Luc dressed in a colourful "African" style – blue-and-white checked shirts, a feathered hat, Rastafarian touches – that was of his own devising. For both men, this imaginative work did not signal an absence of knowledge of the past; instead, it was a sign of virtuosity and deep knowledge. But it was also a reflection of the fact that it was the *African* past, as opposed to the European past, which lent itself to this kind of interpretive and imaginative work.

But this inventiveness was only possible in relation to the constraints of orthography and genealogy. During my time in Seychelles, Nigel Henri, a well-known and successful visual artist, was collaborating on a project about the origins of Seychellois family

names with the National Heritage Division of the Ministry. Henri explained that this required research into name origins, as well as the production of visual work. I assumed that this project would fit into a tradition of exploring geographical origins, as the ties that bound Seychelles to other places were so clearly visible in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, East and South Asian names. These names encoded a history of trade, of movement back and forth across the Indian Ocean. African surnames were not common, as the trade in human chattel had precluded their transmission, but Afro-Creole history was visible in the fact that many common Seychellois names were not only first names (Benedict and Benedict 1982:143), but often specifically *women's* first names: Adelaide, Betsy, Ernesta, Julie, Marie. Some of the more romantic, heroic sounding surnames – Marengo, Telemaque – were derived from the names of ships that had carried enslaved Africans to the islands. Billy King, regarded as the prime mover in the artistic genealogy of Seychelles, had disembarked without even this much – his name, on his arrival in 1867 along with a group of other Liberated Africans, was William No 37 (Durup 2010:15).

For Henri, origins were not a question of geography but of language. He was thinking about how to produce a Kreol alphabet of occupational surnames – butcher, baker, potter – as well as names that were straightforward nouns (e.g. Oiseau, 'bird'). It was clear that this kind of project could fit well within state *kreolite*, by emphasising skill and craft, rather than slavery, as constitutive of the Creole past. The simplicity and directness of the images, as well as their incorporation into an alphabet, was intended to facilitate children's history education. At the same time, producing a properly grammatical history meant enduring the constraints of grammar. Henri mentioned the surname 'Bacco,' pointing out that *bacco* meant a kind of pipe and that this suggested a link with plumbing that he was eager to explore; but a truly Kreol alphabet could not contain the letter C, which had been excised as unnecessary when the orthography of the SPPF era was produced. The question

became one of how to produce the kind of history required in a form that would be recognised as part of a legitimate genealogy.

This chapter has argued that the language of “roots” works to naturalise Seychellois *kreolite* as singular and fixed. In doing so, it draws on the racialised history of planting in the islands; both the construction of racial categories that was part of the plantation, and the material knowledge of specific trees and plants produced in this setting. Seychellois living transnationally participate in pan-Creole spaces that acknowledge mobility, mutability, and the history of slavery. At the same time, understanding themselves as Seychellois in relation to the nation-state requires engaging with a genealogical model that has historically privileged whiteness. While state actors attempt to revalue Afro-Creole identity through linguistic and creative practices, these attempts to engage with material variation are still constrained by the rigidity of classifications and an understanding of evidence of the Creole past as textual. The next chapter will take up evidence of the slave past that exists beyond and outside this.

Chapter 2: *Later* (Land): Property and Inheritance

The landowner had sent his workmen to dig holes for fencing. Soon after he set off to the site and as he arrived upon his horse a workman came to him and said, "I'm sorry master, but my spade dug too deeply and hit one of your clay pots." The boss was mystified but tried not to show it, he just nodded and sent all the workmen to dig in a different area. That night the boss returned with his son to the same spot and with the aid of a lamp started to dig, long into the night.

No one knows exactly what was found but the family prospered from that time onwards...

(Ducrotoy 1995:59)

This chapter re-treads the territory of the plantation with an eye to the plantation *as* territory. While the previous chapter dealt with plantation as a process through which plants and people re-shaped the landscape of Seychelles, this chapter will consider the concrete spatialities of this process. I argue that through the plantation, land was figured as a prototypical property, and that this property relation has ongoing implications for the relationship between people and things. Since this institution was implicated in the production of the idea of race, the understanding of property is also racialized – ownership is characterised as an ability entailed by whiteness, and whiteness characterised as a kind of property. In a system overtly organized along racial lines, this once justified passing as white. In the present day, after the redistribution of land in the wake of the coup, and the appropriation of this land by the tourist industry, it justifies the purposeful ambiguity of the category "Creole", which makes claims to whiteness as well as blackness. "Creole" is itself conceptualised as property, "Creole values" as material value.

Creole properties

This section draws on the previous chapter's observation that "intangible cultural heritage" is often employed in Seychelles specifically in relation to Afro-Creole (as opposed to European-derived) artefacts, sites and practices. I consider what it means for "intangible" heritage to be protected on the basis of an implicit understanding that it is a kind of property. Property is explicitly evoked through the legal framework of Intellectual Property, which similarly deals with ownership of intangible objects. Artists and heritage practitioners in Seychelles must therefore interact with understandings of property based on the right to exclude, and must consider their applicability for both material and immaterial objects.

The idea of "intangible" cultural heritage is operative within the context of state *kreolite*, and is specifically deployed in order to make sense of and preserve practices derived from the experience of slavery and associated with the Afro-Creole experience. During my time in Seychelles, interlocutors working within the Ministry of Culture and adjacent heritage organisations were using this term in connection with the traditional music genre, *moutya*. It was also used in connection with Kreol language forms – songs, stories, dramatic forms rooted in orality. In its most expansive sense, it was applied to "Creole values": politeness, respect for one's elders, and aesthetics. For many interlocutors, this framing was a way to protect aspects of traditional life and "folklore" that epitomised these traditional values and which might, in an emphasis on the monumental, fall by the wayside. This section will argue that such values continually interacted with an idea of economic value, even if this was conceptualised as potential rather than actual, and these elements were combined in the idea that culture was in some sense property. This underlying property concept is partly inherent in the history of global cultural heritage discourses. In the mid-20th century, cultural heritage was conceptualised

as “cultural property,” (Ahmad 2006:294), and some theorists have argued that the idea of “heritage as a kind of property” has persisted (Geismar 2015:78) even in relation to the intangible.

The property-like aspects of heritage were especially evident where *moutya* (a traditional music genre) was concerned. Though I will have much more to say about *moutya* in Chapter 6, it is important to note here that it is a genre associated with slavery, and that it is derived from secret gatherings of enslaved Africans in out of the way places. Interlocutors in heritage and the National Arts Council were keen to have it officially recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage, and they understood this in the context of other traditional Indian Ocean music genres. I was often told that this push for recognition was taking place on the basis that La Réunion “had” *maloya*, and Mauritius “had” – *moutya* was not only distinctively Seychellois but was defined as such in relation to these other genres. This relational differentiation is also extremely important at the level of form; Indian Ocean traditional genres have many similar, overlapping characteristics in terms of sounds (Naylor 2005:2) and commonly vary in terms of tempo (Jeffery 2010a:430) and perceived closeness to African, Asian or European genres. Having a genre recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage within this context could be a way for marginalised Afro-Creole groups to secure recognition (Jeffery and Rotter 2018), but for some of my interlocutors it was understood as part of recognition as a marketable nation-state. If Seychelles was understood to be marginal, this was marginality in relation to Mauritius, their arts scene and their tourist economy. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in the scope of its remit, recognises that Indian Ocean nations are commercial competitors and that culture is an element within this competition.

The campaign for recognition was also emblematic of an entangling of arts and heritage practitioners (who were also often active within politics, or had day jobs as educators). Musicians such as Patrick Victor, David Philoe and Jean-Marc Volcy understood *moutya* not only as a historical form, but as part of their work, and so were instrumental in championing its recognition. While they would never have asserted individual ownership of *moutya*, their own use of and knowledge of the form demanded that they be part of its revival. It was not that original contributions to music were unimportant in this context, but that the genre was considered to have value for Seychellois as a population, and to be collectively owned.

But this reckoning of value between global, regional, national and individual scales was not always so free of conflict. Some of the most significant nodes within these entangled networks of heritage and arts practitioners were artists' associations. For many artists, membership of a larger collective was of paramount importance – often it was only through membership of an artists' association, or a day job for a state ministry or in education, that an individual could finance their artistic work and seek out opportunities for development. This could generate tension; ownership of an artwork or output could easily become contested, and this was magnified by the extent to which art was considered a public good that had to be collective in order to be considered 'useful.'

If "intangible cultural heritage" was a way of treating particular things and practices as property at a national scale, another discourse was becoming operative at an individual scale : Intellectual Property (IP). In August 2016, Nigel Henri invited me to attend a three-day IP workshop at a luxurious hotel in Beau Vallon. The workshop was organised by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the African Region Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), and was attended by well-known artists, creators and

businesspeople would be present; alongside these, there were attendees from the Ministry of Finance, NATCOF (the consumer rights organization), the Registrar of Copyrights, and the Industrial Patents Office. Almost everyone was affiliated with a body larger than themselves (including me – I was present as a guest of SEYLAR, the association headed by Nigel). The workshop coordinator was clearly pleased by the level of attendance and engagement among Seychellois artists, and yet it quickly became apparent that there was a marked difference between what he sought to convey and what attendees sought to get from him. Though the workshop was comprised of several sessions – one on patents, one from the ARIPO representative on the importance of regional specificity – all were geared towards the elaboration of Intellectual Property as a framework. This term, it was explained again and again, covered all “creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce.” It was emphasised that the “intangible” nature of these creations made them a particular kind of object necessitating a special legal apparatus. Yet in “sensitising” Seychellois to this conceptual framework, the workshop organisers tried to convey that this was not merely a new and contingent understanding of art and culture, but the explication of a set of natural laws that had an a priori existence. The moral imperative to understand and appreciate culture in this way was drawn from the fact of property.

This contrasted with the focus of the attendees who, rather than discussing IP in the abstract, wanted space to deconstruct their own experiences in detail and to receive advice. The fact that there was no system of royalties for radio-play in Seychelles, nor protection against the reproduction of art-works, had caused individuals significant financial and emotional hardship. But much of what troubled attendees was far more nebulous than this – the sense that one’s style or propensity for particular kinds of subject matter could be mimicked. Much of the discussion focused on the extraction of dues or

damages from other artists; recognition for creative work was conceptualised as having an inherently punitive dimension.

This tendency came to a head in a discussion of the word ‘Creole.’ One man raised the issue of a Creole-themed event that used the word in its branding and marketing. The presenters agreed that the brand, along with its logo, could be considered the IP of the event organisers; only for the original querent to ask why it was that La Réunion, Haiti, and other Caribbean countries were permitted to host Creole festivals. Surely, he asked, this was stealing? The heated discussion that followed took in the branding of beauty contests and travel agencies, the Seychelles Festival Kreol, and various representations of ‘Creole identity’ across the Afro-diasporic world. Other attendees spoke up, keen to make it clear that these things were not of a piece (and that the first man could not claim ownership of all that was Creole), in a way that still situated Seychelles as the ultimate origin of all *kreolite*.

The *moutya* revival and the IP workshop both suggested that in Seychelles, as in other places, ‘Creole values’ had both distinct materialities and clear economic implications. In invoking an old anthropological debate about the difference between values (in the sociological sense) and value (in the financial sense), I do not mean to imply that these examples can resolve this tension at a theoretical level. Rather, I am interested in the extent to which the concept of property functions as a *site* of tension. The attempt to situate the term ‘Creole’ as property likely has something to do with the fact that heritage discourses often retrench the power of elites by creating a “middle management” (Beardslee 2016:89) whose purview is ‘culture,’ but it is also a consequence of what ‘Creole’ itself entails. Being Creole is not just about a set of material relationships; it is specifically about property.

Island possessions

While the introduction to this thesis has characterised being Creole as a material relationship, arguing that it is fundamentally about property requires revisiting the history of Seychelles to understand the role of property within the history of the islands. Property, in this context, was not only economically important, but helped to constitute some actors as people, while placing others firmly beyond personhood. The kind of property that bestowed this personhood was 'land.'

The institution of the plantation is significant within the social construction of property in Seychelles, but I begin from an earlier point: initial colonial encounters with the islands. There is a tendency in recent literature to downplay the geographical uniqueness and isolation of islands. Historians influenced by Braudel's work on the Mediterranean have engaged with the Indian Ocean as a region made up of both sea and land, in which routes between islands were as important as islands themselves (Pearson 2003:13). Social scientists have argued that islands are always embedded in larger relationships that belie their apparent isolation (Eriksen 1993:144); that the continents of the world are better understood as engaged in archipelagic relations with small islands (Stratford, et al. 2011:121). While understanding the relationships in which the Seychelles islands were (and are) embedded is necessary, part of their construction as imperial possessions is based on their thing-like qualities.

Prior to settlement, the islands of the Seychelles group were desired objects. Viewed through the prism of competing European sovereignties, they were potentially territory (Hall 2013:11), but could not yet be disposed of as property. Portuguese, Dutch, English and French observers noted them as a potential resource in the Indian Ocean

region, yet the exact nature of this potential remained undetermined for some time. Their proximity to Africa and Asia (itself the product of a particular kind of gaze, for they might equally have been considered distant) meant that both British and French empires considered them a possible node in the route to India, and therefore of strategic use militarily and economically. At the same time, their remoteness, in terms of the necessary transportation of resources, made both powers reluctant to act upon this potential. Like other kinds of frontier, unpossessed islands prompted colonising powers to see “a landscape that doesn’t exist” (Tsing 2000:133); uninhabited islands, like “uninhabitable” ones, left an imaginative gap (McKittrick 2013:6) that filled with imperial ambitions of their incorporation into a vast world order.

The laying of the French Stone of Possession in 1770 represented a shift in the status of the archipelago from potential resource to actual possession (and it was as “possession” and “dependency” of Mauritius that Seychelles subsequently passed to the British in 1814). While it is true that the islands were subsequently incorporated into vast global networks, they have never fully shed this object-like quality. This is immediately obvious in tourist imaginaries, in which images of the ‘private’ island retreat proliferate (Kothari and Wilkinson 2010:1407). This privacy, pleasure and possessiveness was part of the nostalgic engagement with Seychelles on the part of London interlocutors, who sometimes expressed longing for ‘their’ island. In Seychelles, interlocutors delighted in the difference between islands, which each had “their own magic,” as Patrick Victor put it. If land is an abstraction (Hall 2013:7) defined by its uses, meanings, and material affordances, as well as the ways that these become inscribed through labour and law (Li 2014:589), in Seychelles there is a deep mutually reinforcing association between the uniqueness of the islands and the idea of property. This association was present in the early settlement and intensified throughout the colonial period, Independence, and the era of modern tourism.

The early colony was constructed around a “plantation logic” characterised by “overdevelopment, accumulation, and land ownership” as defining principles (McKittrick 2011:950). Yet this totalizing logic was developed piecemeal, through experimentation with land and people, as the governing powers in Mauritius granted land concessions for the development of plantation agriculture. The first settlements, which began in 1771 with Pierre Hangard’s spice garden on Ste Anne, followed by the establishment of a garden by Gillot and Anselme on Mahé (Durup 2013:4-5), were intended to realise the productive potential of the islands. These early concessions were granted on the basis of how productive the land appeared to be, and how able they thought settlers would be in realising this productivity. As in the Atlantic world, plantation logic encompassed not only the arrangements of plantation land and the distinction between chattel house and *grann kaz* (lit. “big house”; plantation house), but also “patterns of specialized activities—from domestic labor and field labor to blacksmithing, management, and church activities” (McKittrick 2013:8). The plantation thus naturalised particular spatial divisions and uses of land that became commonplace within modernity; these divisions were racialized.

Throughout the 1780s, Mauritian officials attempted to regulate the moral dimensions of the land concession system and its impact upon the habitants of Seychelles. Because the use of land for plantation production was reliant on the institution of slavery, this morality was specifically in relation to race. The first jurisprudence of Seychelles was the Code Noir, followed by the Code Delalau, both of which set out the terms of slavery (Durup 2013:24). Like other such codes in the Atlantic world, they were premised on an equivalence between full legal personhood and rights over property (Radin 1982). White Europeans were entitled to own and dispose of property, while enslaved Africans were part of “a peculiar, mixed category of property and humanity – a hybrid possessing inherent instabilities that were reflected in its treatment and ratification by the law” (Harris

1993:1718). Habitants were charged with making land productive and were supposed to do so via appropriation of the generative and reproductive capacities of enslaved people (ibid. 1719). Enslaved people had no rights to property, but in Seychelles freed slaves could be granted concessions that were only a quarter of the standard 108 arpents. This did not compromise white ownership or personhood; white habitants who freed slaves often did so explicitly in order to increase their own holdings.

Indian Ocean slavery resembled Atlantic slavery in many of its major features, not least that land was figured as property through the maximising, accumulative logic of the plantation. Because personhood and ownership of property were conflated, this produced an idea of whiteness as a “treasured property” (ibid. 1713) that “conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits” (ibid. 1726). These benefits were not only visible in the right to own property, but in the right to exclude others from it (ibid. 1736) or to delimit the terms of their engagement with it. In Seychelles, this right was exercised via the Code Malavois of 1787, which circumscribed both land use and relations between races. In particular, *métissage* and the birth of children who compromised both spatial and racial divisions were troubling to the colonial government. In 1786, there was only one married man in Seychelles, and no white female settlers had been dispatched from Mauritius, so that the “illegal cohabitation” of white habitants with enslaved African women (Durup 2013:13) was acknowledged as almost an inevitability. In response, the Code Malavois specified that future concessions would only be made to married colonists, their children, or “people of useful professions” (ibid. 15). *Métissage* was regulated on the understanding that it was unfeasible to prohibit it, and the government experimented with the idea that mixed race habitants – such as the “coloured” regiment sent from Mauritius in 1788 – might be better physically and temperamentally suited to the landscape (ibid. 13). The

intermediate “coloured” category, which overlaps with the present use of ‘Creole’, was thus potentially advantageous because and not in spite of its mixedness.

Legislation circumscribed proper use of land, but it is important that land was also owned and cultivated in ways that subverted a racial hierarchy that privileged whiteness. Free South Asian habitants accumulated large tracts of land, though they were castigated by Malavois in terms that echo modern-day Seychellois chauvinism (ibid. 20). A free Malagasy woman, Vola-ma-Effa, appears throughout historical accounts as a threat to propriety due to the bacchanalian gatherings hosted on her land, and legislators, seeking to limit her influence, tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to accept a concession further from the town and the public life of the colony (ibid. 18). Most subversive of all were the maroon slaves who eked out an existence in the hillside forests of places like La Misere. While there is little written directly about the conditions in which they lived, various sources confirm that *marronage* was common, and *mocambos*¹⁵ in Seychelles must have necessitated the same provisioning as those in the Atlantic world. Namely, they would have required that formerly enslaved people utilise their agricultural knowledge in an illicit system of cultivation that paralleled the legal one (Carney and Rosomoff 2011:81).

This spectrum of land usage engendered “legalized black servitude while simultaneously sanctioning black placelessness and constraint” (McKittrick 2011:948) in ways that became paradigmatic. In the period following abolition, apprenticeship granted formerly enslaved people small pieces of land on properties to which they had once themselves been appended as human chattel, on the precondition that they be taught to manage it by their former masters. This practice continued to centre whiteness as the origin of agricultural and economic knowledge, and was unsuccessful insofar as land that

¹⁵ Temporary settlements.

had been so divided fell into a state characterised as “disuse.”¹⁶ Drawing on parallel accounts in the Atlantic world, disuse might be recast as the use of family plots for family subsistence. The failure of apprenticeship in turn contributed to the importation of “Liberated Africans” as indentured labourers in the latter part of the 19th century. Liberated Africans were from the outset treated as problematic by their employers, who had hoped for South Asian “coolie” labourers instead. Their problematic status justified the removal of Liberated African children to the Anglican school at Mission Lodge, where they were made to cultivate hillside land without remuneration.

I understand this history of colonial land use as producing what Katherine McKittrick calls a “black sense of place.” She has argued that

the structural workings of racism kept black cultures in place and tagged them as placeless, as these communities innovatively worked within, across, and outside commonsense cartographic and topographical texts [...] that which ‘structures’ a black sense of place are the knotted diasporic tenets of coloniality, dehumanization, and resistance; this is a sense of place wherein the violence of displacement and bondage, produced within a plantation economy, extends and is given a geographic future (2011:949).

A black sense of place thus encompasses both constraint and possibilities for resistance, which in Seychelles are figured against white delimitation of property, and whiteness as property. Key to this is the ongoing nature of these processes. In the following section, I will turn to the legacy of these colonial processes for land use in the new nation.

Inheritance: race and place

Though it is important that more recent ways of organising land were not identical to the plantation, they can be seen to embody related logics of spatial organisation, and to

¹⁶ If historical accounts often take for granted a reluctance on the part of former slaves to engage in further labour, this idea is part of the self-image of modern day Afro-Creole Seychellois; it was sometimes given to me as an historical explanation for the fact that “Seychellois don’t want to work.”

preserve (and sometimes exacerbate) some of the same tensions. Land continues to be contentious in Seychelles for reasons that are characterised as related to party politics, and this is part of the legacy of Independence and the *koudeta*. At the same time, these processes of contention are couched in racial terms, and retrench patterns that existed as part of the plantation. “Plantation logic” re-emerges in the ways that Seychellois make claims within social and economic hierarchies.

While the plantation was declining in the early 20th century, Seychellois began to organise politically in a way that was directly related to the economic consequences of this collapse. The very earliest political party was the Seychelles Taxpayers Association, a body whose central purpose was the representation of landowners’ interests to the British government, and whose membership had to rely upon the status of Seychelles as a territory to make claims regarding their own land and its regulation. The movement for closer integration with Britain was driven by the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) under James Mancham, a party whose membership overlapped with Taxpayers Association and represented many of the same interests. I understand the movement against Independence as predicated on the notion that clientelism was a source of economic and social certainty; Mancham was especially frank about the fact that severing the colonial relationship would have placed Seychelles in a powerless position rather than one of self-determination (Mancham 1983:90)

More significantly, many of the new political class (including Mancham) were Kenya-borns (see **Archipelago**) who had experienced the rigidly constructed spatial boundaries between races in British East Africa. Clifford, a Seychellois in his sixties who had migrated from Kenya as a young man, gave me a detailed account of this. He knew vaguely of my own family because Seychellois were so specifically located within colonial Nairobi;

many of diaspora dwelt in an area known as the Eastleigh Aerodrome, working for the RAF. Clifford explained that Seychellois, along with Asian East Africans, were classed as “other” rather than black or white, regardless of phenotype. This classification informed where children were permitted to go to school, and fixed families in particular parts of the city, where they not only made up Seychellois enclaves but also lived intimately alongside Asians. Clifford, who considers himself black and Afro-Creole, had enjoyed an idyllic childhood on a farm in the countryside, and servants. He had attended an Asian school prior to the restructuring of the colonial education system; afterwards, in the mixed school, he encountered racism only in the surprise with which his white classmates processed the fact that his marks were far better than theirs. He described how cab drivers in Nairobi understood the situatedness of the community, often bringing newly-embarked Seychellois direct to his mother’s doorstep so that she would take them in. He conveyed a sense of a whole city-within-a-city, in which multiple Seychellois families lived in houses within shared compounds, using the central courtyard to screen movies, host snake charmers and magicians, or share food and alcohol at “bottle parties.”

One means of dealing with this division of space and property was through incorporation into it. Seychellois could be accommodated within the colonial order through various kinds of passing – a phenomenon common to “race subordination in all societies structured on white supremacy” (Harris 1993:1712). For Clifford, belonging to the same category as East African Asians (themselves figured as middlemen between white and black populations) conferred advantages during his youth that he recognised as formative and positive. For my own Grandad Paul, colonial categories enabled him to channel the white elements of his Seychellois ancestry and his European appearance into a straightforwardly “Portuguese” identity, minus blackness or African-ness. In either man’s case, passing cannot be represented as a process logically following from phenotype, or as purely self-

interested – in white supremacist societies, it is sometimes the only viable economic strategy and as such impacts families rather than just individuals (ibid.). While it has important psychological dimensions (Fanon 2008 (1967)), passing is located in economics and external structures. However, cultivating an adjacency to whiteness became problematic when colonial structures were dismantled and abandoned. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Seychellois families who had capitalised on their ambiguous status were displaced back to Seychelles by nationalization processes that aimed to redistribute land and reconfigure space.

As nationalization began to take place, Seychellois were also presented with the opportunity to resist the colonial order and embrace alternative African socialist conceptions of land and property. In the Tanzanian context, Julius Nyerere instituted land reforms intended to make agricultural work the basis for “*ujumaa*” (“familyhood,” African socialism) (Brennan 2012:144). The Seychelles Peoples United Party (SPUP), under Albert René, were influenced by this thinking and maintained close relationships with Nyerere’s Tanzania (Franda 1982:119). During the SPPF era, the Seychelles government (under René) relied on Tanzanian military support in enforcing the national curfew, as well as training the army and the police. They began to reshape the Seychellois relationship with land, and the districts of Seychelles took on a special importance as administrative and affective units. As the National Youth Service (dealt with more fully in Chapter 5) was being developed for post-secondary children, the system of ‘zoning’ was introduced for children in primary and secondary school. The two-tiered system of private and state-funded education was abolished, and all children legally had to attend their local district school. Each district was overseen by a local District Authority office and police station, often adjacent to the local church. My interlocutors, especially those who worked in the arts, often spontaneously reminisced about this period as a time when each district had its own dance troupe, its own

theatre group, its own local celebrations of national holidays. The district had often played a pivotal role in the artistic education of interlocutors. Vincent Milius, poet, comedian and historian, told me that every day he thought about how his district, Takamaka, was the best place on earth.

Land ownership was opened up to ordinary Seychellois, as government loans for this purpose became more accessible. While this differed from the redistribution that took place in the wake of abolition in that there was no explicit imperative to utilise it in a particular way, Seychellois were more broadly enlisted in the project of nation-building that valorised working land (especially in an agricultural context). Nina, descendent of a *grann blan* family who had been threatened with violence even prior to independence, referred to the land that was redistributed during this time as “stolen.” In fact, the reformist potential of land redistribution was moderated by the influence of tourism, which required colonial ideas of luxury to remain in place.

Tourism was a new influence on land and property, but nonetheless maintained a continuity with older patterns. Wealthy Seychellois (often with a direct genealogical link to *grann blan* families) benefitted financially from the industry in ways that often did not trickle down, while the majority of Seychellois increasingly shared public space with “high yield” tourists seeking a luxurious experience. My interlocutors also perceived a shift from the tourism of the 1970s and 1980s to that of the present day. There was a consensus that the new tourism was more overtly private, and this caused anxiety and resentment. Beaches were increasingly incorporated into private resorts in ways that prohibited local use, and these private resorts were spread along the coasts of Mahé (sometimes even on former plantation land), diverting tourist attention from Victoria and creating separate spheres of tourist and local activity.

Opposition to the tourist industry's use of land was overtly politicised and associated with LDS supporters, who were critical of "corruption" surrounding the accumulation and use of land by wealthy foreign nationals as well as the government. "Corruption", in this respect, was a way of figuring an entire system of informal exchange, nepotism, and reproduction of hierarchy, whilst also deliberately linking it discursively to Africa and other post-independence regimes. Resistance was almost always figured as happening against "business imagined not quite/not white" (Tsing 2000:117); no one I spoke to ever suggested that corruption might be a consequence of the old order that had favoured white people. On the contrary, this dissent was spatialized in such a way that Afro-Creole Seychellois were figured as the problematic category; areas such as Belonie, where I lived, were assumed to have a high population of LDS supporters due to the presence of social housing. Charles, a visual artist, told me that social housing had made people ungrateful and dependent on government handouts. He, like other interlocutors, understood popular LDS support as predicated on a lack of understanding of the pre-*koudeta* economic landscape, and a misguided desire to return to it.

Instead of opposing the new tourist economy, Charles sought to negotiate a position within it by cultivating long-term relationships with particular resorts, performing maintenance work and doing interior decorating for them, and providing commissioned works that he could produce quickly and without rumination. He described the process of laying out three large canvases intended for a hotel lobby, spattering them with paint in ways that conveyed "energy" without any deeper meaning. In return, the resort continued to seek work from him and sometimes offered him free stays and use of its facilities. This was a common strategy across fields – musicians like Achille Luc and Keven Valentin had similarly long-term performing engagements at particular resorts. Making material

contributions in this way did not assert ownership of the space, but did entitle interlocutors to make claims proportionate to the duration and intimacy of the relationship.

These artist-patron dynamics draw on a longer history of property and an understanding of labour derived from the plantation. The Benedicts, whose fieldwork was carried out during the 1960s and '70s, described an economic logic prevalent among their interlocutors that they linked to “persisting social patterns” post-slavery (1982:185). This was the need to create a sense of obligation in one’s employer that could not be discharged through the payment of wages, but only through the provision of further opportunities for work (ibid.). Like other “peasant” logics cross-culturally and historically, it operated on the basis that subordinate classes could leverage their place within a hierarchy (Scott 1985:328). For the Benedicts it was an element of the prevailing condition of “dependency,” emerging from a Cold War context in which former colonies might be incapable of surviving economically without a larger patron nation-state towards which claims could be directed. Like other contemporary writers, they understood “dependency” as a psychological as well as an economic condition (Mannoni 1990:39), explaining the behaviour of individual actors in daily life as well as the global positioning of the new nation. In the context of this thesis, both of these elements are comprehensible through the framework of intimacy: Seychelles national ideas of sovereignty were underwritten by smaller engagements with property and ownership that scaled up.

Inheritance: plots and discoveries

This section considers the temporality of property through its impact at the level of the household, rather than the nation. If being Creole is conceptualised as an inheritance – racial, national, and cultural – this is within an existing framework in which inheritance

carries particular relationships and obligations with it. Property, through the process of inheritance, directs past accumulation towards future wealth; in doing so, it can also be a site of surprising discoveries.

While some of my interlocutors in Seychelles had been able to purchase land, there was a general sense that tourism had made it more difficult to do so. Most interlocutors lived within a larger family unit, and several – unless they had moved to newer housing developments – had inherited their home or part of the land on which it stood. The legal system in Seychelles followed French civil law even after the islands passed to the British; under this system, land was inherited equally by all children. The Benedicts described how during the 1960s and 1970s, a plot that had become “too small to be divided [...] must either be sold and the proceeds shared or its heirs must agree to keep it undivided” (Benedict and Benedict 1982:212). Legal claims to property were complicated by divisions and subdivisions:

If a married man or woman dies intestate, one-half of the property goes to the surviving spouse, but if a man or woman makes a will, his or her spouse can be disinherited. Legitimate children cannot be disinherited. If there is a single child, half the property must go to that child. If there are two children, each gets one-third, the remaining third being subject to a will. If there are three or more children, three quarters of the property goes to them, and only one-quarter can be willed to others. A surviving spouse enjoys *jouissance* of the property while she or he lives; that is, the survivor can enjoy the income from the property but cannot sell or give away the children’s share (ibid.).

It is still the case that “this results, over the course of generations, in very large numbers of people who have claims to small plots” (ibid.), and that members of a family would tend to build their own houses on such plots. Post-*koudeta* legislation meant that land considered to be in a state of disuse, or to which there were too many claimants, could be repossessed by the state. The tenor of relationships within a family influenced all of this, from who was formally recognised as an heir, to who wanted to live near other family members and why.



Figure 11. Waste ground at the boundary of Belonie and Bel Eau, close to the centre of Victoria. The land is overgrown and marshy while on either side, new apartment complexes have been built. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

My own kin were preoccupied with land and inheritance, as each person had a claim to the whole plot in Belonie. No subdivisions had been made explicit in legal documents, but there were persistent attempts to create and enforce sub-plots informally. The land on which Granny Cecile’s house stood was thick with phantom edifices; it was the foundation for various dreams of property development and future wealth, and since to embark on one such adventure would preclude the realisation of others, this led to arguments. I soon found during my time in Seychelles that other families had the same kinds of passions and resentments. Everyone was either trying to defend their own land from appropriation and encroachment by others, or building a house on a newly-acquired plot, or trying to sell off an unwanted plot to a developer. Interlocutors recommended that I secure my citizenship as quickly as possible, in order to have a chance of getting a loan and purchasing land of my own, in a tone reminiscent of British small-talk about the housing ladder. One interlocutor

reminisced fondly about his own cunning in pretending that he had every intention of starting a family, in order to increase the chance of his loan being approved. Others were locked in unpleasant stalemates with neighbours who sought to limit their access to well-used tracks and paths on the basis that it crossed private land; and one family had spent considerable time and effort developing a piece of land, only to find out that it was actually their neighbour's plot. Their own plot, which they had taken to be his, had remained waste ground. These kinds of conflicts fed into disputes between neighbours and family members that, in their complexity, transcended conflict over property, and this will be developed further in Chapter 4. For now, it is sufficient to say that these conflicts were predicated on an idea of the scarcity of land as a resource, and that they were frequent sources of gossip, often bitter in their implications. While the plantation, the *koudeta* and tourism all played a role in the assemblage of land as a scarce resource, for many families it was more directly related to the mechanisms of inheritance.

Rayna, a friend whom I often visited at her family home in the South of Mahé, *danbwa* (in the jungle), had inherited the house in which she lived. Her siblings had moved away over the years, but Rayna had continued to live in the house with her mother, until her mother's death. Rayna's family had clearly divided the property so that the house was hers alone, while her siblings owned various parts of the land on which fruit and vegetables were grown. Mervyn, who often stayed at the house, told me that Rayna's family had lived in the area for generations, but she was modest about this fact where he was boastful of it. He would often say of Rayna (especially if another man, or a newcomer to the area, did not show her an appropriate level of respect), "She is the queen of the South."

This comment was not only grounded in his admiration for her as a person, but his awareness of the strength of her ties to the area. Rayna's grandfather had been a foreman

at the nearby (long defunct) copra-processing plant; the plant had been established by a *grann blan* family who still owned much of the land surrounding it. Because of this, Rayna had a special relationship with Madanm Elisabeth, the matriarch of the *grann blan* family. The history of Seychelles is full of such matriarchal figures, as properties have historically been figured as “Mrs So-and-So’s land,” in a way that extends feminine domestic authority to the area surrounding the house (Benedict and Benedict 1982:211). Pointe Larue is named after one of the first settlers, a Mrs Larue, who owned a large concession there (Durup 2013:4). During the 1960s and 1970s, it was possible for women to acquire land through their intimate relationships with men and to continue to make a living from it after the man had died or the relationship had ended; men, in contrast, were not able to maintain land alone unless they could afford to pay labourers (ibid.). From my own fieldwork it is apparent that the very active role taken by women in family life is connected with the peculiarly feminine nature of this form of accumulation, and that relationships between women often determine how land is inherited and used.

It is also the case that land is never all that is inherited in the transfer of property; Seychellois also inherit existing relationships, grievances and obligations. For this reason, a ‘problem with the neighbours’ rarely ceases simply because land has been passed through a chain of inheritance, and sometimes the problem intensifies. The amicable relationship between Rayna and Madanm Elisabeth was different in character to the usual dynamic between neighbours in that it was not one of equality exactly, but involved mutual recognition and a special politeness that foreigners (even white foreigners) could never have expected from either party. It occurred to me that the implication of the family’s ‘belonging’ to the land was that Rayna’s family might very well once have ‘belonged’ to Madanm Elisabeth’s family – if not literally, figuratively, through the perpetuation of dynamics of racialized ownership into the plantation system of the 20th century. In my own

family, there was a similar association between Granny Cecile's surname and Pointe Larue. Rayna did not phrase it in these terms; she simply made clear that the relationship between the two families had endured for generations.

Land is not only a way of conceptualising space, but, as inherited property, mediates pasts and futures. As an assemblage, it is the product of particular histories, known and unknown; as a resource, its value lies in its capacity to accommodate futures. Anna Tsing has referred to this as the "economy of appearances" in relation to gold mining and speculation (2000); here, I want to bring this concept to bear on another kind of wealth: buried treasure.

The Seychelles archipelago is popularly imagined to be the site of several pirate treasure hoards, known and unknown, buried on various beaches around the islands. While I originally took it for granted that such stories were part of the tourist imaginary, I came to realise that they were common among variety of interlocutors. Members of the UK diaspora planned (jokingly and seriously) treasure-hunting expeditions for their trips home, while stories of actual encounters and discoveries circulated in Seychelles. Tourists dining at Marie Antoinette (a well-known Creole restaurant) discussed the portrait of Olivier Levasseur, known as *La Buse* ("the Buzzard") and the hoard he is believed to have buried on Mahé during the 1720s. He is believed (at his death on the scaffold) to have bequeathed a 17-line cryptogram indicating its whereabouts to treasure-seekers. In the intervening centuries, Seychellois and foreigners have taken up this challenge. Documents have appeared and disappeared, carvings were uncovered in the rocks of Bel Ombre by the widowed Rose Savy, and corpses supposed to be pirates (complete with gold earrings) have been discovered in the ground at Bel Ombre. Children in the SHF Heritage Clubs participated in activities around this excavated site. Uncle Frank (long based in the UK)

engaged with the treasure as material wealth, purchasing metal detectors, attempting to decode obscure clues and maps. I felt that comfort with the pirate past was proportionally related to discomfort with the slave past; it conveyed a sense of the islands' historical abundance without prompting questions about labour or exploitation. It also suggested a kind of boundless potentiality in relation to land, as everywhere on the islands was potentially the site of buried treasure. But Emmanuel D'Offay (speaking in passing, while we discussed visual art) told me that people searching with metal detectors were confused; treasure was more metaphysical than literal.

I came to understand this remark through the story of Monia's treasure, which enfolds not only the pirate past but the more recent SPPF era. Beyond this, it also encompassed the metaphysical and the divine. I nonetheless hesitate to say that it was about politics, or about religion – rather, it was not only a question of Monia's account, but also of the exegesis of other actors with their own ideas of how wealth worked.

I first heard it from Rayna and Mervyn. One evening in the South, while we cooked dinner, Rayna asked me which of the local artists I had contacted. When I mentioned Charles, she stopped stirring the pot of chicken curry and came to stand in the kitchen doorway. "But there is someone from the same family as Charles," she said, "who found treasure on the beach. It came up from the sand, and when they went back with a boy to help them, it turned into shells." This was formally similar to an old story of the *grann blan* D'Offays, and I assumed it was of a similar vintage. The D'Offays had turned up a huge hoard of pirate treasure in the hills, not far from where we sat. As soon as they had gone to spread the news of the, the gold turned into copper and never changed back.

But this other story turned out to be recent, as I discovered when I asked Charles about it. "Yes, it is true. This lady, my relative, she found the treasure. It came up, like

this.” He made an upward-surging motion with his hand. As he helped me arrange a visit with his relative, Monia, he was giddy – he kept repeating that no one else, nowadays, had a story of this sort.

In the days between our conversation and the visit, I asked Vania about treasure more generally. She echoed D’Offay’s contention that those who tried to find treasure with the aid of maps and metal detectors were intent on a fool’s errand – it was God who revealed the existence of treasure, and He did so through dreams. Vania’s father had once met a man who had dreamed of a chest on the beach and, waking in his home in the mountains, walked immediately down to the coast. The chest was waiting where he had dreamed it would be, and when he opened it he found that it overflowed with riches. By himself, he dragged it all the way up the mountain, where he kept it a secret. He used the wealth he had gained to buy land and build a house, never spending it on frivolous things or showing off. He told her father this story only at the very end of his life; he had never told another soul. Vania explained, “When you dream about treasure, you must go right away. Don’t stop to think. Don’t tell anyone else. To tell someone else means you have doubt in your heart. God meant the treasure for you and you alone. You cannot doubt.”

A few days later, I went with Charles to meet Monia at her bungalow in the South. A small, neatly dressed elderly woman, she explained that she was very busy and could not speak for long, and asked us to sit on plastic picnic chairs on the veranda while she fetched us some orangeade. Behind my seat, taking up an entire wall, was a huge painting of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and an altar groaning beneath the weight of votive candles and porcelain statuettes. Monia sat in a chair facing me, and began to talk about her life as a teacher, without which she said the rest of the story would be meaningless. She had refused to teach the “biased” history endorsed by the SPPF.

Charles stiffened at this. "I don't know what is your opinion, but I tell everybody," Monia said, her only concession to the likelihood that his political views differed from hers, and continued speaking. She had told the story many times before, to journalists and TV producers, but had always been disappointed by their decision to omit important details; the true story started when she was disciplined by her headmistress for espousing views that went against the mythology of the ruling party and the new nation.

The *koudeta* was commemorated every year on Liberation Day, which in the 1980s was celebrated through the progress of *Laflanm Liberasyon* (the 'liberation flame'), carried from village to village by a parade of joyous young socialists. Monia taught the children in her class that *Laflanm Liberasyon* was less important than Jesus, Light of the World, and for this she was brought before a committee of her fellow teachers, who mocked her and called her mad. She bore such affronts without complaint. "Madame," she told me, "I'm black, I'm ill-bred, I'm uneducated, I have no money, I'm poor. There is one thing that I believe. I believe in God, I believe in His Word. I believe and I believe! That's His Word that the Bible told me – I believe! And I *believe!*"

One day, as she left the school via a sandy path, her foot struck something solid: a coin, shining among the roots of the palms. Monia picked up the coin and, as if propelled by some invisible mechanism (she mimed this as she described it), more coins flowed up out of the earth beneath it. She asked a passing child to help her, but he could see only bottle caps lying in the dirt. Monia managed to collect forty-odd coins, and when word got out the headmistress of the school alerted the newspapers, who came to investigate the treasure site. The coins passed into the state's possession and rested for a while in a glass case in the old national museum, the headmistress credited as their discoverer, before they were removed to storage. Monia managed to keep two, out of the hoard, as her own; she

was later accused of having stolen them. When Albert René visited the school, Monia importuned his wife and whispered the true story to her. The First Lady listened attentively, embraced her, kissed her cheek. This was the only recognition that Monia ever received, aside from the interest of journalists who removed all trace of politics from her tale. The authorities sent a man to dig for more, but when he started digging, a powerful, invisible force threw him into the air and held him against the ground. He refused to go back.

Monia pressed us to stay, her duties at church entirely forgotten, wanting instead to talk family history. When we finally left, Charles was quiet and cagey, chewing the inside of his cheek. He struggled to believe this story, but not its supernatural elements; instead, he was troubled by the political context that Monia had insisted was the most important part.

*

I have reproduced this narrative as fully as possible in part because Monia asked me to, and in doing so must acknowledge that it is not easily reducible to any one of its elements. If it is about politics, religion, and soured relationships, it is also about Monia's personal encounters with all of those things. It matters not only that this is the story of something that happened recently, but that it happened to Monia – with her own convictions and experiences – in particular.

But the story goes beyond these personal encounters to include the narratives and explanations of others, raising questions of emphasis. For journalists, the discovery was simultaneously historical, drawing on the hidden pirate wealth of the islands; and ahistorical, because relating it to the recent SPPF past was inconceivable. For neighbours, acquaintances, and other local Seychellois, it was a story worth circulating insofar as it

reflected the fairytale structure of other treasure narratives, and confirmed existing ideas about the morally proper disposal of wealth. It is significant that, in Vania's account, using treasure morally entailed discreetly purchasing land and building a house, both of which realised the generative potential of property. The state's repossession of the coins precluded this proper disposal. Not only were they concealed again behind mechanisms of power, less porous and penetrable than the earth. Not only did it require, through attribution of discovery, a kind of boasting that, within other stories, could be punished; the attribution was also an incorrect one. However, from the state's point of view it surely mattered little that treasure had been bequeathed to one woman among many. Placing the coins within the museum incorporated them into national heritage rather than personal inheritance.

I would contend that stories of treasure obliquely illustrate important ideas about the disposal of property that pertain to inheritance at a familial level. These principles – discretion, productivity, and the importance of the house – will be explored further in Part II of this thesis. Such stories also reflect a relationship between land and value. The sudden discovery of treasure suggests the possibility of other such discoveries in other places, and these possibilities contribute to the appraisal of land as valuable – either through situating it in historical chains of value, or much more directly. My own relatives spoke sometimes of “old coins” found in the plot at Belonie, as an argument for keeping the land in the family – after all, who knew what else would be uncovered?

Property (real and imagined)

I return now to the conflict surrounding the category ‘Creole’, having given some idea of the historical property relations underlying it. This section will consider ‘Creole’ as a kind of

property in the context of the “plantation logic” that shaped racialized notions of personhood. I will argue on this basis that “appearances” – the aspects of property that are understood to be fictive, potential, and emergent – are central to understanding the value of *kreolite* for the nation as an entity.

The legal definition of property acknowledges that it includes not only tangible objects but intangibles such as IP, goodwill, and earning potential (Harris 1993:1728); that it implies particular rights to use and enjoyment (ibid. 1734) as well as an absolute right to exclude (ibid. 1736). While interlocutors at the WIPO workshop were careful to avoid assuming that ‘Creole’ was property (still less the property of any one person), discussion revealed that they were attentive to the ways that it was property-like. It had obvious economic potential within the tourist economy, which had to be balanced against the existence of other Creole branding strategies within a global marketplace of nations. It was part of the remit of “cultural heritage,” with its attendant property-like dimensions.

This chapter has demonstrated that there is an existing historical connection between the category ‘Creole’ and the idea of property. Through the plantation, notions of personhood premised on the right to own property were developed in tandem with ideas of race that excluded black people from owning property and being recognised as full persons. In Seychelles, the existence of intermediate racial categories allowed for possible engagements with property and ownership on the part of people of colour and black people. During the colonial period the category ‘Creole’ represented one strategic possibility in the attempt to claim and make use of property, as it encoded a claim to whiteness. However, during the Independence, the *koudeta* and its aftermath, ‘Creole’ also accommodated a “black sense of space” through the redistribution of land and its

reevaluation as a common resource. Being Creole has, throughout the history of Seychelles, been about a relationship with property.

The qualities of property in Seychelles have been often emerged as salient in the context of inheritance. The heritable nature of property makes it important within the context of everyday encounters with land, the house, and relations between kin and neighbours surrounding this. As a racialized identity, 'Creole' is heritable through the kinds of rooting processes described in Chapter 1: through situatedness within a genealogy, as well as through inherited resemblance. It is also part of a larger national "heritage" that implies not only a relationship with the plantation past, but ownership of that past. In both contexts, it locates value in past histories (even painful or secret ones), and posits this value as the basis of imagined future wealth.

Before moving onto the next chapter, it is worth emphasising the role of imagination within these processes. It could be argued that, despite the fact that *kreolite* resembles property in particular respects, and despite the fact that its history overlaps with the history of property, the two concepts are fundamentally incompatible. Such a critique might hinge on the extent to which race can be considered alienable in the way that land is. Following Harris's observation that if racial identity is not physically alienable, land is not either (1993:1732), I would argue that this is not self-evidently true. In fact, the extent to which such alienability might be possible is a tension that constantly troubles theories of property and value within anthropology and other fields (to say nothing of daily life). Land's status as a "fictitious commodity" is tied to its status as a more general kind of fiction (Li 2014:600), its existence constituted not only through the actual ways it is used but through its possible uses. Consequently, part of the value of land is generated through "appearances" that suggest imaginative possibilities (Tsing 2000). Both race and

phenotype, similarly, are constituted at the intersection of individual and collective understandings of beauty and status (Edmonds 2010:169). In Seychelles, race, land and property have been ways of conceptualising various sorts of value; the category 'Creole' is a consequence of these negotiations.

The importance of "appearances," rather than a more intrinsic idea of value, will be explored in Part II of this thesis.

Part II

Chapter 3: Appearances: The Clean House

Be it seaman's chest, traveller's trunk, virginal fiancée's chest of drawers, finely carved pedestal table, romantic console, sideboard bearing fine Canton china, great dining table of family feasts, heavy baroque corniced cupboard, canopied bed skirted by immaculate lace, delicately caned and medallioned window seat, "East India Company" armchair, simple kitchen dresser or easy chair on the verandah, exotic woods, eternally alive, everywhere vibrate and unbind the vital energy of latent sap.

(Eichler de Saint Jorre, et al. 1989:147)

One morning in October, I received a phone call from Colbert Nourrice, who told me that he was supervising a workshop for the participants of the Young Artists Competition (part of Festival Kreol 2016) and wondered if I would like to pass by. The workshop was at the Carrefour des Arts, in the small gallery, which had been carefully emptied of the works usually exhibited there. The young artists – school-aged children and post-secondary students at the Seychelles Institute of Art and Design – had been asked to produce works on the theme "traditional life." In preparation, they had been given a presentation by a speaker from the National Heritage division of the Ministry of Culture, and by the time I arrived they were hard at work on paintings depicting women stirring bubbling potfuls of *bouyon*, or polishing the floor with coconut husk brushes. One post-secondary student shyly made eye contact with me, so I drifted over to look at his painting: women washing clothes at the river, beating them clean on the rocks, and leaving them in the sun to dry. Such domestic scenes are commonplace in Seychelles, and almost always depict women who are black and perhaps elderly, with brightly-coloured scarves tied around their heads, and their voices raised in song or laughter. They recur in visual art, in the reminiscences of

those who recall the pre-*koudeta* landscape, on SBC television specials and in musical theatre productions, as a visual shorthand for “traditional life.”

This traditional life was implicitly lived within (or in close proximity to) a traditional *lakaz Kreol* (Creole house), a locale that was the focus of actors within the heritage and culture industry, tourism, education, and art. Modern houses, in both Seychelles and London, were part of an aesthetic genealogy of which an idealised *lakaz Kreol* was the progenitor – both in terms of how houses were decorated, and the materials of which they were made. I track this genealogy from the most monumental examples of houses – the *grann kaz* – to humbler dwellings that maintain some of the same decorative features. In this continuity, the house embodied a kind of fixity. At the same time, it was important that houses should encompass variation. This chapter will argue that the importance of the traditional house is rooted in its organization of space: an hygienic binary between inside and outside, men and women, that echoes the Caribbean division between “respectability” and “reputation” (Wilson 1969). The considerable effort that goes into producing a “clean” house, from attention to dress to the minutiae of polite behaviour, is a consequence of a Seychellois emphasis upon surfaces and appearances as indicative of moral character. The materiality of the home is thus important in a specific, detailed sense as well as a general one, as it concretises different conceptions of *kreolite*.

Home

This section outlines some of the features of modern family homes in both London and Seychelles in order to convey a sense of the similarities they share and how these point to common aesthetic sensibilities that might be understood as ‘Creole.’ While modern homes

were not uniform in these aesthetic qualities, this points towards variation and mutability as important elements of the Creole home.

Cousin Benjamin's house, on a hillside in the north of Mahé, was somewhat typical of modern houses: a bungalow, recently built with the aid of a loan, that formed a sort of compound with the houses of members of the extended family. At the front of the house there was a veranda, with neat wicker chairs arranged around a low table and slatted blinds. There were two bedrooms and a bathroom, but the kitchen-cum-living room was the largest. It was not solely a product of my positionality that the living room was a central space in the house; both living room and veranda were central to entertaining guests, and so they tended to be full of objects displayed, in part, for the enjoyment of guests. These included flat screen TVs and entertainment systems, decorative textiles (whether embroidered tablecloths, satin curtains, or actual garments hung on the wall like pictures), porcelain figurines and ceramics, and photographic calendars that either indicated the inhabitant's place of work, or their political allegiance.

In Benjamin's house, the living room was dominated by a huge sideboard containing a flat-screen TV in the central compartment, along with pieces of special occasion crockery, photographs of family (including several of myself and my brother), toys and books. On one wall there was a framed photograph of an actor Benjamin had idolised in childhood. The chairs and sofa were of the 'East India Company' kind common throughout Seychelles – wooden-framed, with loose cushions; very close to the ground, with a slope that forced the sitter into a lolling position. The living room was constantly being updated – during my visit, measurements were taken for a custom-made sideboard that would replace the mass-produced one. While domestic matters are still associated with women, the Benedicts observed during the 1960s that buying furniture was a

masculine duty (Benedict and Benedict 1982:189), and this appeared to be the case for Benjamin. Often, if his day at work had been particularly stressful, he would rearrange the furniture until he was satisfied that he had found the optimal configuration. “You like this?” he would say, half to himself, as he stood back to admire the arrangement. “Granny taught me this.”

Houses in Seychelles were spaces that mingled pride and anxiety, and were consequently often in a state of flux, expanding just as families did. Many interlocutors were embroiled in processes of remodelling or even planning to build a larger home altogether. Often the sheer amount of stuff contained in a house was hard for inhabitants to manage, and objects had to be discarded in order to make room for still more things (a process explored more thoroughly in Chapter 4). None of this was perceived as wasted effort, though it was often a source of amusement and self-deprecation. The British sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances* (broadcast on SBC) was popular with older Seychellois, who recognised their own concerns about class and propriety in the absurd main character, Hyacinth Bucket. BBC cooking and DIY shows were a popular source of inspiration, and reassuring in their demonstration of the universality of such tinkering with life in the home. British family life was popularly treated as aspirational, though British tastes were only somewhat palatable to many Seychellois. Britishness was enfolded into a monolithic Westernness that was synonymous with material abundance and financial security; Seychellois in the islands tended thus tended to assume that their relatives in London lived in large, beautiful houses.

Seychellois in London lived, like many other Londoners, in council flats and social housing, or rented from private landlords. They were often quietly envious of their relatives in the islands who owned property, especially if they were able not only to build a

house but to cultivate a garden. Despite their differing circumstances, members of the diaspora preserved Seychellois aesthetics within their own homes – not identically, but in a way that suggested a common aesthetic genealogy. The concept of ‘home’ has been centred within migration and diaspora studies as something transnational actors maintain a connection with, and seek to create or recreate in a new host country (Sheffer 2003; Shuval 2000), even whilst living in very temporary or undesirable conditions (Rapport and Dawson 1998:32). Objects – gifts, comestibles, and mementoes – facilitate an engagement with home through imagination and memory, and experiential dimensions (Abranches 2013; Jeffery and Rotter 2016; Warin and Dennis 2005). I approached Seychellois interlocutors in London with questions that were premised on home as an *idea*, and consequently it took some time in Seychelles to make the focal adjustment necessary to understand what might otherwise have been immediately obvious. It was not *home* that was important for Seychellois, but *house*. This distinction may appear trifling, but is a question of the extent to which anyone longs for a home in the abstract – the specificity of home and the house is evident in the way that migrants’ contributions are implicated in its upkeep (Olwig 2007:197). If the home is desirable because of its specificity, in Seychelles this specificity is realised through the form and appearance of the Creole house.

The living room ideally contained a large wooden sideboard containing photographs and tourist mementoes from the islands; a low coffee table, covered with a crocheted cloth; lacy net-curtains. While it was not the case that these living rooms were entirely different to English ones, perhaps by British standards they would have been regarded as slightly old-fashioned and kitsch. As someone who had grown up in a home in which these kinds of ephemeral objects – *coco de mer* keychains, painted china, coasters printed with images of pristine beaches, straw hats – were prominently displayed, I experienced the living rooms of interlocutors as touching and familiar. Vanessa, a woman

in her late twenties born and brought up in London, lived in a small council flat with her partner and young children. The living room would not easily have accommodated a sideboard, and perhaps for Vanessa it would not have suited the aesthetic of the room, but still there was a corner unit containing sea shells and an empty bottle of Coco D'Amour liqueur (shaped like a *coco de mer*). Her cousin, Philomena, who was a similar age, was born and brought up in Italy before relocating to London. Proud of being half-Italian, she was sometimes concerned that she had lost touch with her Seychellois roots, as even her Seychelles-born mother preferred to cook Italian food and to speak Italian to her. But in Philomena's flat there was also a unit filled with mementoes from Seychelles.

I had assumed that tourist objects and souvenirs were present in the houses of the London diaspora precisely because they were far away, and experienced the islands as tourists whenever they returned. But in fact, these objects were commonly found throughout homes in Seychelles too, where they had less of an aura of preciousness. Souvenir china was used to serve food, and souvenir rugs unceremoniously trodden on. Glass bottles from Takamaka Distillery were reused to chill boiled tap water, while fancy bottles – anything that had contained a sought-after whiskey – might stay visible on a shelf in the sideboard long after they were empty. Everywhere there were items (calendars, magnets, clocks, towels, coasters) that bore images of the islands' beaches; this struck me as somehow incongruous, like wearing a t-shirt with one's own face on it. In Seychelles, souvenirs were pretty but mundane items, while in London they functioned as mementoes of specific times and places. This was especially obvious (given the extent to which gatherings in the London community revolved around food) in relation to tableware. In homes in both Seychelles and London, there was a clear distinction between plastic picnic tableware and the good plates and utensils reserved for guests. In the past, Seychellois had used lightweight tin camping utensils, as these had been available in the islands. Kristofer

Adelaide, a young architect who runs a Seychellois Creole street food business under the name *Vinn Goute* ('come and taste'), liked to present his food on this tableware, which he associated with his parents and grandparents. "That's becoming fashionable here now," he said, "but we had that first."

The house was a space where a constant traffic between the temporary and the permanent took place, and where what had once signalled transience could come to embody authenticity and 'culture.' This was most obvious to me through visiting, and subsequently living in, the kind of modern dwelling that Seychellois in the islands did *not* consider aspirational: social housing. While the government heavily publicises social housing schemes, interlocutors were concerned that they perpetuated historical dependency and created an environment in which people "don't want to work."

Uncle Terence's family lived in a new estate on reclaimed land. Housing estates were a mixture of lower-priced houses with aluminium siding exteriors, and more expensive concrete dwellings, but both usually had upstairs bedrooms in addition to a downstairs room and kitchen. The monthly payment towards eventual ownership of his (concrete) house constituted a substantial proportion of Terence's wage, but he put aside money for furniture every month too. He had covered the concrete floors with brightly-coloured linoleum and mounted fans to the walls of some of the rooms because "it is too hot here, always too hot." He explained that he wanted a house that he could pass on to his children. During my stay with the family in March 2016, the dining table and chairs were lightweight aluminium ones; by the time I returned for a visit in October, these had been replaced with sturdy wooden items.



Figure 12. Social housing in Seychelles. Photograph by a young relative who cannot be credited without identifying others in this chapter (2016).

Part of what was troubled interlocutors was the material conditions of estates, and not only because the houses were sometimes beset by infrastructural issues. Two major estates were on reclaimed land, where rain fell less frequently, even as the rest of the island experienced downpours. One female interlocutor, who worked in education, was aghast to find that I was staying in such a place, and asked, “But do you like it? It is always so *hot*. And there are no *trees*.” It was true that there was not the same profusion of vegetation that existed everywhere else. Scrubby casuarinas had taken root in the thin, rocky soil; some interlocutors were of the opinion that they had grown almost spontaneously, without being planted, the seeds finding their way there naturally. While casuarinas are highly valued for their wood, which is durable and long-lasting, these were considered unlikely to grow to maturity, and therefore good for nothing.

The troubling quality of this environment was reinforced by the uniformity of the houses. Uncle Frank had taken me to visit Terence while I was still staying at Benjamin's. We sat on the low sofa in the living room, drinking Sprite and eating cassava chips that had been put into a decorative bowl by Terence's wife, who was firm about such details. "You know," said Frank admiringly, "it's a nice set-up you've got here in Seychelles. Everyone's house is a little bit different, not just two-up, two-down like in the UK."

While this was true of houses on Mahé more generally, those on the estates were all fairly structurally identical – to one another and to most other houses on most other housing estates (the exception being the less-common multi-storey blocks of apartments). At a more global scale, there was nothing much to distinguish them from other forms of social housing and suburban developments in other parts of the world. Several of my interlocutors claimed that they always got lost when they ventured onto Terence's estate, finding it inherently confusing. I, who had grown up on suburban streets, found it far more intuitive to conceptualise space in terms of a block and a house number than to interpret the often esoteric directions given by locals.¹⁷ What confused interlocutors was the similarity of the houses, regardless of whether they were numbered; for them, the number system was a poor compensation for the fundamentally unclear nature of the spatial arrangement.

Only in living with Terence, and walking through the estate every day, did I begin to attend to the differences between houses. These differences seemed to constitute "distinction" (Bourdieu 2013) or "style" (Miller 1994:220) for they were, if not competitive,

¹⁷ As Bernard Georges records in his compendium of essays about Seychelles, "Someone was once invited to an open-air party at a place described on the card as '*on the road above the big rock beneath the apple tree*', and in parliament recently one member asked when a streetlight would be put up in '*the road which starts at the rubber clump and goes through the coconuts and joins with the main road by the Seventh Day Adventist Church*.' The thing is that everyone knew exactly the road he meant, as indeed did the person invited to the party under the apple tree. He just didn't go because he'd heard that the beer was not free" (2011:14).

articulated in reference to other houses locally and globally. Residents had taken care to hang brightly-coloured curtains, facing outwards towards the street, in each room, or beaded curtains in the doorway; they filled the narrow gardens (in which plants usually grew in pots) with ornaments. Some had painted their front door, or mounted metal decorations to the wall of the house. The project of distinction was obviously an important one, but these differences were flattened in the accounts of those outside the estates, for whom the image of such a place was simple. It was hot, there were no trees, and the people did “not want to work.”

Viewing these houses through the general lens of ‘home’ might obscure these differences; as an idea that appears as a basic human need, emotionally and physically, home is positively valued. The house, in its specificity, does not necessarily entail this kind of positive valuation. It is neither natural nor constructed only on the basis of needs, but is a site of intense effort. The importance of this effort is apparent through the variation accepted as part of the idealised traditional house.

Appearances

This section proposes that variation between houses constitutes particular houses as beautiful. Traditional houses were appreciated not simply as heritage artefacts, but as beautiful places to live, and this could be true of both ostentatious dwellings and humbler ones so long as particular aesthetic features were present. Part of what unifies different houses aesthetically is the use of wood and plant-derived materials that, through their regenerative qualities, accommodate change whilst remaining fixed. Variation is positive because it is related to this mutability which ultimately has a positive effect on the house’s inhabitants.

The “traditional” house was a focus of interlocutors working within the Ministry of Culture, various heritage organizations, and the arts. This term referred to several categories of structure, all associated with the pre-*koudeta* landscape: the *grann kaz* (plantation house); *lakaz Kreol* (the Creole house); and humbler houses that had aesthetic origins in the chattel houses of labourers. Yet these houses were also “happy objects” (Ahmed 2010:45) for interlocutors who were not specialists in their restoration and upkeep – they were the subjects of coffee table books and TV specials, and were consumed in the form of art and posters.

Grann kaz

The plantation house had a special importance within national heritage in particular. While interlocutors working in this field were influenced by the UNESCO framing of “tangible” and “intangible” cultural heritage, which aimed to avoid privileging monumental structures at the expense of other forms of cultural expression (Bortolotto 2007:22-3) the *grann kaz* – as one of the most monumental forms of architecture – was at the centre of public engagements with history. At least nine of the popular national monuments of Seychelles are houses, and of these, six – at Plaine St Andre, Domaine Val des Pres, Pointe Larue, and on the islands of La Digue, Silhouette, and Farquhar – are plantation houses built throughout the period of slavery (Mathiot 2016). Another, La Bastille at Union Vale, was established by a planter at the beginning of the 20th century.

These structures were sites of extreme ambivalence for many of the people orchestrating their upkeep, as well as for the general public. As special sites of colonial contact, where violence had shaped landscapes and people in overt ways, their past lives were disturbing. At the same time, the processes through which history was naturalised

(described in Chapter 1) and the re-inscription of this history through subsequent forms of social organisation (Chapter 2), meant that there were limits to how plantations could be publicly described as violent. Their value to cultural tourism was offset by the effort of describing their function in terms as vague and euphemistic as possible.



Figure 13. The interior of Lenstiti Kreol, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Through the *grann kaz*, the plantation could be recast as a kind of domestic site emblematic of Seychellois domesticity more generally (while work in the field was consigned to the “intangible”). Often tourist literature relating to the *grann kaz* would coyly assert a probable link with slavery, on the basis of “artefacts” that had been found in the house or on the land. In a landscape so indelibly shaped by the “total economic institution” of the plantation (Beckford 1972:55), such descriptions – which posit a lack of material evidence of the slave past – have a surreal quality.

Nonetheless, heritage workers often had to explain the plantation to children too young to grasp the significance of the landmarks that surrounded them. While working with Seychelles Heritage Foundation (SHF), I travelled with a large group of children from school Heritage Clubs to the restored plantation house at Plaine St Andre. I asked Egla Laudelout-Rose, Education Officer at SHF, how she had explained the function of the building to the forty or so primary school children in our charge.

“I just told them that this was the *grann kaz*, and the people who lived here were the whites. I told them that the black people lived in the building there, and that they had to work very hard. And then I said, ‘Do you notice the very nice wooden floor in this house, and the furniture? We don’t have such furniture any more.’ They are too young to understand anything else, and of course one must be careful not to say anything that will encourage them to bully each other.”

This encouragement to re-focus attention on the beauty of the house was perhaps the wisest course of action in dealing with a group of children mostly under the age of ten. But it was also emblematic of an approach taken by the heritage industry as a whole, which dwells on the aesthetics of the *grann kaz* rather than exploring the violence encoded in them.



Figure 14. An East India Company chair with footrests, Plaine St Andre. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

This raises the question of the extent to which this beauty can be understood apart from the violence of its production (a problem that has occult consequences, discussed in Chapter 4). The wooden furniture and crocheted textiles, ingenious “silhouette” riddle pictures, and family portraits had all been produced within the historical and cultural milieu of chattel slavery. But the *grann kaz* also reproduced, through the arrangement of these objects, elements of “plantation logic” (McKittrick 2013:4). The spatial form of the house was in this instance based on a separation of people, forms of labour and racial orders that was understood as hygienic. Luxurious parlours, bedrooms and wide verandas were kept clean of the labour that took place in the fields. The kitchen, as an intermediate space, was often a separate structure at the back of the house – the restored plantation house at Au Cap (the site of *Lenstiti Kreol*, the Creole Institute) follows this model, as does the stylised central building at Domaine Val des Pres. Divisions between types of work and types of

people within the colonial world were intended to keep both nation and family free of “internal contamination” (Stoler 2010:80); the *grann kaz* illustrates this separation spatially.



Figure 15. *Lakwizin tradisyonel Seselwa* (traditional Seychellois kitchen) at Lenstiti Kreol, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Domaine Val des Pres embodied this logic of separation in a more extreme way. As a “craft village” where artisans could produce and sell work to tourists, it took the form of a main building (modelled on the *grann kaz*, and made to represent it in theatrical productions) surrounded by smaller huts where artisans worked and purveyed their creations. As such, it drew directly on the structure of the plantation, in which the *grann kaz* was ringed with chattel houses. At Domaine Val des Pres, the plantation was re-imagined as a village with “identifiable economic zones,” in a way that drew attention to the origins of real Seychellois villages and districts (products of the land concession system described in Chapter 2, as much as the reorganization of the *koudeta*). This visual overlap between plantation and idealised town “spatializes early conceptions of urban life within the context

of a racial economy” (McKittrick 2013:8). These forms of separation, which recur across modern economic life, are part of “different kinds and types of racial violence” (ibid. 9); but they are also, in relation to the *grann kaz*, elements of a romanticised notion of the past.



Figure 16. The craft village at Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Lakaz Kreol

The *grann kaz* is not the only house of interest to Seychellois historians and artists, and the extent of its influence should not be overstated. During my time in Seychelles a more general “Creole house” was usually the focal point of nostalgia, within the culture industry and on the part of ordinary Seychellois. Interlocutors took pleasure in describing the houses in which they had grown up, and it was these houses that Seychellois in London often evoked through the décor of their own living spaces.

In the early 20th century, such houses were usually bungalows, but two-storey houses (though rare) did exist and are still visible on Mahé. The traditional house typically had a veranda with raffia blinds, dormer windows, and a corrugated iron roof. It was not

only important that the house be structured along these archetypal lines, but also that it should be somewhat unlike the other houses surrounding it. Distinct permutations of the same set of aesthetic principles constitute *lakaz Kreol* as distinctively Creole (Mathiot 2016).

The elements of separation present in the *grann kaz* continued to obtain within the Creole house. The kitchen was usually attached to the main building by a covered way; at Rayna's house, it was a separate structure that opened at one side onto the veranda, and at the other side onto the garden. The foundations of the house, which was raised either on concrete blocks or posts, played an important role in reminiscences of childhood: interlocutors remembered playing beneath the house as children. Egbert Marday, a painter and sculptor, recalled that he had first learned to draw in the dirt under the house with a stick.



Figure 17. A traditional house at Mont Fleuri, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O'Gorman (2016).

The real distinction between traditional and modern houses was in the use of wood for both construction and furnishing. Visual artist Robert Alexis recalled growing up in a Creole house in Mont Fleuri, where the floors were all smoothly polished wood. He spoke of this upbringing as a privilege, as wooden houses have become increasingly emblematic of wealth, due to the cost of maintaining them against climate and pests alike. This association with wealth means that luxury hotels and tourist architecture still make use of native woods like *bwa natte*, *bwa takamaka* and casuarina. The artist George Camille constructed a gallery in Victoria called Kaz Zanana that utilised traditional construction techniques. With its dark wooden verandas and posts carved in the likeness of pineapples, it functioned as both a venue for exhibitions and poetry slams, and as a gallery and gift shop. Private individuals considered the use of wood carefully – Vincent Milius, a historian and comic poet, told me that when he had enough money he would build a big house entirely of wood. “Well,” he said, taking a moment to think it over. “*Mostly wood.*”

The superiority of the wooden house was treated as obvious, both aesthetically and morally. I visited the artist and theatre director John Etienne at his home in the southern hills of Mahé. A slight man in his fifties, barefoot and dressed in a loose linen collarless shirt, he explained that he had designed and constructed his ideal home. He was from a *grann blan* family who had been part of the colonial administrative class, and the wood for the vast, luxurious house was from trees that had grown on his own land. The house reflected his love of nature, and his family’s nautical pedigree. There was a central pillar in the huge living room that had been fashioned from a felled tree. The breakfast table was a slab of varnished *bwa takamaka* on a post carved to look like a trunk, complete with roots. He showed me the upstairs rooms, where the window frames, walls and ceilings utilised joining techniques that originated in ship-building.

He told me, “I’m building this wooden house to make people see that this is the best way to live.” While his explanation of this way of life was idiosyncratic – taking in magnetic fields, Ayurvedic medicine, and the relationship between the temperature of the human body and the age at which Jesus had died – much of it was in keeping with beliefs other interlocutors expressed about houses. He insisted that living in buildings with too much iron in them caused cancer,

“Because the blood is made of iron, and this big magnetic field is pushing pressure on them. This is not simple. It is true. It is a reality, there is a connection – that’s energy. And if you know about what’s around us, then you can better protect yourself. You can better know how to live. And I will advise people to live in wooden houses if possible, because the wood is not a conductor [...] And also the wood, it keeps you warm, it has the same warmth like the human body [...] So you have to live in this cool warmth. Too much heat is not good, too little is not good. So this is why the wood provides this comfort. See how pleasant it is when you touch it, it’s clean, it’s natural, and the wood is *alive*.

“It never dies, I’ll tell you why. If I die tomorrow, you leave me in the same condition like this wood, I will rot. But this wood doesn’t. So it remains alive.”

It was commonly understood in Seychelles that cancer had emerged from modernity. The notion that wood was a kind of living material was also expressed to me at different times by different people. The underlying belief was that both the form and material of a house (as well as its contents, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4) could have a profound and direct impact upon the health of its inhabitants.



Figure 18. A house at Mont Buxton, Bel Air district, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

It was no more the case that all Seychellois had lived in grand wooden houses than it was that the life of the *grann kaz* represented the social history of Seychelles. For much of the history of the islands, the majority of the population have lived in the kinds of houses that were cheapest and easiest to construct, and though the materials of these have varied over time, their form has persisted.

SHF has contributed to the construction of a small Creole house, christened *Lakaz Roza* (Roza’s House), at Domaine Val des Pres Craft Village. This structure is made of wooden slats, raised on concrete foundations, with a galvanised iron roof, and exists for the

consumption of tourists; it is a space where elderly artisans are invited to make and sell their wares. But it is a heavily aestheticized version of a ‘labourers’ house, which in reality may have been far less durable and less wooden; even in the 1960s and 1970s, interlocutors had grown up in far more temporary structures. The Benedicts noted houses woven, in a zigzag pattern, from *koko fey*; Marion Benedict, without realising the extent of the poverty of such a house’s inhabitants, initially considered such houses beautiful (Benedict and Benedict 1982:29-30). My mother, meanwhile, had lived for a time in a bamboo house, and these can still be seen in parts of the South of Mahé.



Figure 19. *Lakaz Roza* at Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

More durable were houses made predominantly of Masonite, or corrugated galvanised iron. Marion Benedict described a “standard two-room hut with a veranda made of government-issued Masonite, with a bright new tin roof and resting cement pillars

[...] The open veranda was cluttered with plants in tin cans, and bushes were planted all around the house” (ibid. 30). The house also had a courtyard (*lakour*) and a mango tree; while a garden is still considered necessary, interlocutors told me that Seychellois now prefer ornamental flowers to functional, edible plants (one man had even been castigated by his neighbours for his kitchen garden, which they felt lowered the tone of the area).

These houses were prefabricated, issued by the government in the 1940s and 1950s, and were never intended to last. Though no longer being built, they still stand throughout Mahé, and are often inhabited by elderly people who lack the means to upgrade them. Granny Cecile’s house at Belonie had originally been of this sort, but her sons had gradually built a concrete structure around it. No one considered these iron houses perfect, but interlocutors who had grown up in them were often nostalgic for the sound of rain falling on the tin roof, or bats dropping breadfruit on it in the dead of night.

Despite their humble appearances and temporary nature, such houses had aesthetic value that has persisted as a source of inspiration for visual artists. This was sometimes related to their external properties: the cheerful primary colours of the galvanised iron heavily featured in paintings by George Camille, Donald Adelaide and Gerard Devoud. Just as often, it was the interior that was considered beautiful, thanks to the practice of papering them with collaged pages torn from magazines. This practice is very much associated with poverty and a lack of financial means to purchase any other kind of decoration¹⁸; yet it makes an appeal to distinction. It suggests that the inhabitants of the house, in spite of their poverty, possess both an aesthetic sense (an eye for colour, shape and juxtaposition), and a desire for a better life (as the images were often explicitly

¹⁸Some commentators have contended that the paper provided insulation (Eichler de Saint Jorre et al 1989: 79) but it is not clear why such insulation should have been necessary.

aspirational ones). Artists such as Leon Radegonde and Jude Ally have been influenced by this practice to produce effaced and defaced collages.

When *Lakaz Roza* was completed, I visited it with children from the SHF Heritage Clubs as part of a series of summer holiday activities. The children were given magazines, scissors and paste, and asked to decorate the interior of the house; they found the end result so enchanting that one little girl asked solemnly if she could live there. Collage techniques tempered the memory of poverty by placing the emphasis on an innate Creole resourcefulness and capacity for creation. In the re-valuing of this mode of decoration, it went unremarked that inhabitants of the much-derided housing estates still sometimes papered their walls in this fashion.

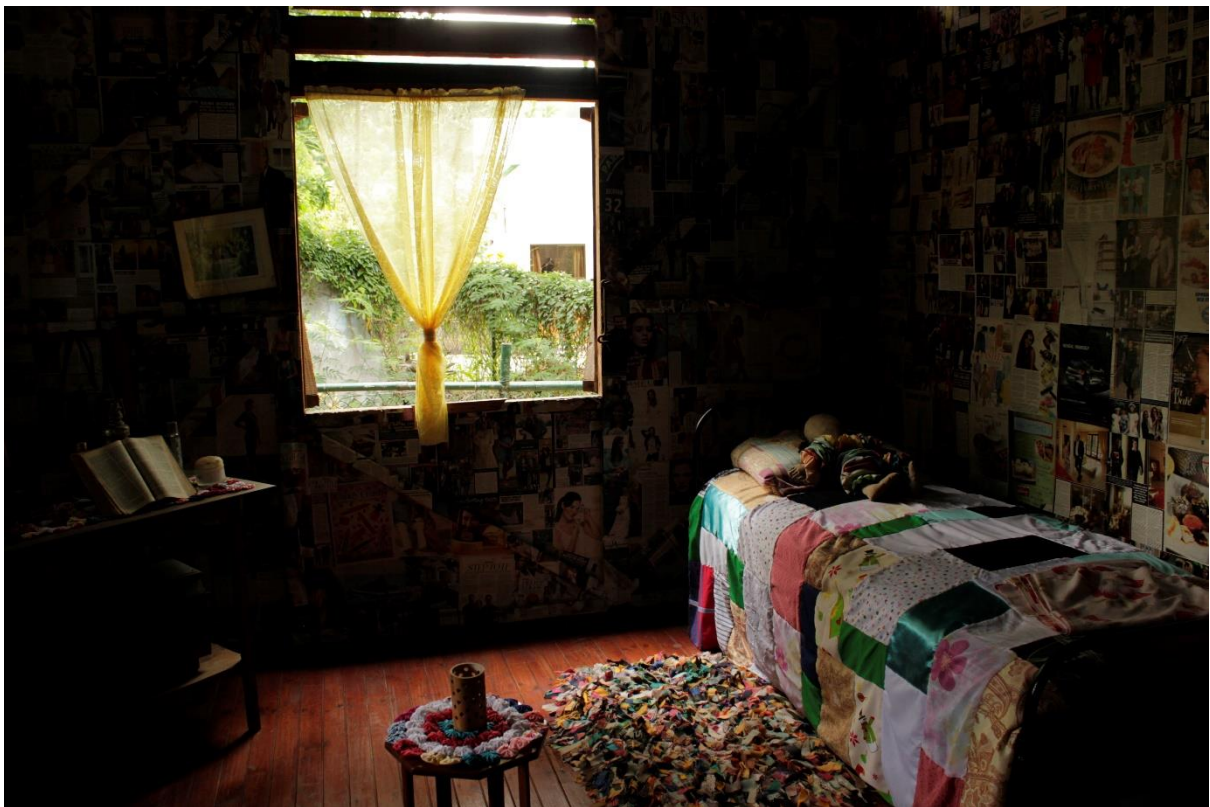


Figure 20. Interior collages at *Lakaz Roza*, Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap, Mahé. Photography by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).



Figure 21. Interior collages at *Lakaz Roza*, Domaine Val des Pres, Au Cap, Mahé. Photography by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

To summarise, there is a common aesthetic thread that runs through the idea of the Creole house, even as it encompasses a variety of possible structures: forms of spatial separation that reflect an idealised family life; the use of natural materials and, wherever possible, wood; and the importance of mutability and variation. This latter quality emerges in the constant movement between the temporary and the permanent in terms of the structure and contents of the house; in the work of making the house look as it ought.

Cleaning the house

The most obvious manifestation of this work was in the cleaning of the family home, a weekly event that coincided with other kinds of work on the appearance. In this section, I

will discuss these in relation to the Caribbean-derived concept of “respectability,” and a moral conservatism rooted in visual appraisal.

In Seychelles, the house and its appearance received the most attention on Saturdays – a kind of generally hygienic day, physically and morally. Whilst this was part of a national self-stereotype (Herzfeld 2014:7), it was also true in many of the houses that I lived in and visited. The house was energetically scrubbed (ideally by all the members of the family), clothes were laundered and hung on the veranda or flattened on rocks in the sunshine, food was purchased and fish gutted. While modern houses were not as decisively divided as the *grann kaz*, it was common to have a second sink just outside the house where clothes or particularly dirty pans could be washed. Even at the house in Belonie, so sparsely populated that norms like this were hard to preserve, it was a point of pride for Uncle Richard that he did his laundry and cleaned the kitchen on Saturdays.

Saturday mornings might begin with a visit to Victoria market and the other shops in town, before they closed at midday for the rest of the weekend. Women strolled through the town centre in high heels or wedge sandals, smart denim peddle-pushers or shorts or flowing maxi dresses, with brightly coloured jewellery and diamante-studded sunglasses – a weekend style that contrasted with the constricting uniforms, blouses and pencil skirts worn during the week. The weekend was also an opportunity to try out trends, filtered through a local aesthetic sensibility, but often transnational and emblematic of a cosmopolitan attitude on the part of the wearer. Since clothes were purchased from the ‘Chinese’ fast-fashion stores or from retailers who had originally purchased them abroad, in terms of cut and colour (a cobalt blue, a tropical floral, a laser-cut hem) they would not have been out of place on a British high street. Little girls were dispatched to ballet or French classes in self-consciously smart-casual attire. Like miniature women, they wore

peddle-pushers and gladiator sandals, toted tiny shoulder-bags, balanced fragile sunglasses atop their freshly washed and braided hairstyles. Little boys and their fathers wore loose but pristine cargo shorts and t-shirts, accessorized with a simple gold chain or baseball cap, and box-fresh trainers.

It was common for families with young children to attend Mass on Saturday afternoon (when special children's Masses and catechism lessons were held), in order to preserve Sunday as a 'family' day of leisure and trips to the beach. In my family, attending Mass meant a rushed lunch of Creole food (rice, curry and *satini* – salad – of some kind) and a quick change of costume. While the clothes worn on Saturday morning were smart, they were not smart enough for church. Instead, women changed into fitted dresses, matching handbags (and older women into matching hats) and high heels. Little girls were swiftly manoeuvred into frilly Alice-in-Wonderland frocks, bows and beads placed in their hair. They carried their own small, prim handbags in front of them, shield-like, and tottered on high heels that demanded the judicious use of sticking plasters. Men wore dress shirts, (sometimes lightly checked, in marshmallow lavenders and lemon yellows), black dress trousers, and polished shoes. Little boys, who might have been pressed into the barbershop at some point in the day, sported crisp hairline shape-ups, and wore the same style of clothes as their fathers.

Interlocutors (especially if they were active within the church) complained that Seychellois cared more about dressing for Mass than about Mass itself. "It is not a fashion show!" more than one person told me, and letters and editorials on this subject were frequently published in newspapers. But at Mass, as in other parts of life, it was important to be dressed properly; to wear neat, attractive clothing that had been washed and ironed with care. My relatives were amused by the thought that in the UK, it was not unusual to

see someone in pyjamas and a jacket buying a pint of milk; this would not have been at all socially acceptable in Seychelles. Uncle Terence's wife berated him for attending Mass in a creased shirt – he looked “mad”, she said.

Taking care over one's appearance acknowledged the gaze of others, and was a basic act of *kourtwazi* (politeness). Cleaning and decorating the house, and attending Church, were likewise not only goods in themselves, but signalled goodness to others. There is a line of continuity between these behaviours, which roughly correspond to what has been recognised, in the Caribbean, as the idea of “respectability” (Wilson 1969). Wilson defined respectability as morally and socially conservative, associated with the reproduction of polite society, and mapping in many respects onto the interior, domestic sphere (though the church, too, was part of this purview) (Wilson 1973:74, 229-32). Respectability, in its reproduction of the logic of social class, was fundamentally conservative (Wilson 1969:78). In Seychelles, interlocutors' accounts emphasised that Seychellois manners nowadays left much to be desired, in comparison with the standards of a bygone era. There was an intense nostalgia, especially among those in the heritage industry, for the mores of the mid-20th century. When I participated in summer holiday activities with the Heritage Clubs, Egla Laudelout-Rose was keen to transmit old-fashioned politeness to the children. As she showed me an extract from a book she has written about etiquette, she said, “I am a sort of Seychellois Emily Post.” Being polite in this way was consistently linked to being Creole, if not explicitly to the state discourse of “Creole values.”

In the context of “Creole values,” what is significant about politeness is that it often operated on the basis of visual appraisals, and that any lapse in standards could not only provoke hurt feelings but encourage wild speculation as to why the lapse had occurred. This was obvious in relation to a simple everyday act: the obligation to notice and

acknowledge others on the street. While interlocutors lamented the density of traffic and the risky behaviour of other drivers, it was considered entirely normal to pull over or stop in the middle of the road just to greet someone (and perhaps offer them a lift, if they needed it). Uncle Frank, having developed an incurious public habitus as a Londoner, was always conscious when he visited Seychelles of the fact that he was snubbing friends and relatives by failing to acknowledge them.

The visual aspect of moral behaviour, and the role of observation in enforcing it, operated on the basis that appearances were morally salient. Daniel Miller's work on post-oil boom Trinidad has contrasted this kind of approach to morality with the implicit "depth ontology" of European-derived Westernness, which posits that the truth of the person is "deep inside ourselves and is in direct opposition to the surface [...] The true core to the self is relatively constant and unchanging and also unresponsive to mere circumstance" (Miller 2010:16). His Trinidadian interlocutors had a "horror" of interiorizing (ibid. 17):

For Trinidadians it is entirely obvious that truth resides on the surface where other people can easily see it and attest to it, while lies are to be found in the hidden recesses deep within. A person's real being, then, is also on the surface, and evident. The deep person, who keeps things stored close to himself or herself and out of view, is viewed as just dishonest (ibid. 18).

While Miller did speculate that this tendency was related to the experience of slavery, he was ultimately more interested in comparing this tendency with other ontologies that likewise failed to find meaning in the idea of metaphorical depth (ibid. 20). It is nonetheless true that Seychellois have historically been held to standards of appearance and comportment shaped by race and racism, and that racial difference has been inscribed on the surface as the body (Mbembe 2017:43) and projected into the interior (Stoler 2010:84). While I would not argue that slavery alone determined this approach to morality, I would contend that plantation history, compounded by the paranoid climate of the SPPF

era, and the importance of the tourist gaze to economic security, have combined to render appearances especially complex in Seychelles.

While interlocutors agreed that this awareness of the gaze of others was not only polite but quintessentially Creole, they experienced this dynamic as somewhat oppressive. The standards of others were often high, especially within intimate and familial settings, and gossip (*kankan*) emerged from the violation of established ideas of courtesy among acquaintances, friends and relatives. The Benedicts considered gossip a source of “power” underlying much of social life in Seychelles (Benedict and Benedict 1982:100), and in Chapter 4 I will explore some of its consequences. Here I wish only to emphasise, that gossip often occurred in response to apparently trivial aspects of a person’s appearance, comportment, or the condition of their home, which invited moral critique by others. The factuality of such critiques was therefore indisputable in at least one sense: it was based on visual evidence accessible to anyone. It was the visibility of certain characteristics – ethnic background, family resemblance, dress sense, sobriety – that constituted them as evidence. The fact that such evidence, and its interpretation, was highly contingent on the positionality of the observer (Miller 2010:21) was a secondary concern.

Kenneth, a man in his sixties, had recently returned from living in the UK for several decades. In the years that he had been away, he felt that life in Seychelles had changed dramatically for the worse. As a child, he had lived in Belonie, and he considered that the change was very noticeable there. While it had always been a slightly disreputable area, he remembered it as a lively, musical place where everyone knew each other; he felt that this had changed with the encroachment of social housing into the area, and with the Westernization of people’s habits. “When I was little,” he said, “when you passed by your neighbour’s house, you had to call, ‘*Bonzour, Madanm. Bonzour, Msye.*’ You did it even if

you didn't know whether they were in, and you couldn't see anyone behind the curtains. If you didn't, and they were there, they would tell your parents, 'I saw that boy of yours today. He didn't say hello.' And your parents would discipline you."

It was an accepted piece of popular wisdom that in the past, people had been morally better because they had maintained particular standards of visual presentation, and because they had taken a keener interest in the visual presentation of their neighbours. But this past had been within living memory, and not all interlocutors wished to romanticise it. "You can't know because you weren't there," said Jean-Claude Mahoune, anthropologist at the Ministry of Culture, "the hell of the traditional society. It really was hell sometimes."

When I interviewed the well-known visual artist George Camille about his time at Goldsmiths in London, he spoke of the "freedom" he experienced living anonymously in a large city. "Nobody knew you," he said, "so nobody cared what length your hair was or what your clothes looked like when they saw you on the street."

Cleanliness, neatness and attractiveness were part of what made the house a moral space, but this did not mean that it was free of conflict. In fact, the very detailed aesthetic standards that had to be upheld exacted an emotional toll through *kankan*. In Chapter 4, I shall have more to say about the difficulty of repressing tendencies that were not respectable, the fate of objects removed from the house, and the way that *kankan* could lead to worse kinds of harm, but for now I shall draw attention to the fact that the "respectable" processes connected with the house are in tension with an opposite. It was not that it was unconscionable to be rude, rebellious or dirty, but that these characteristics were understood within a framework that sought to keep them out of the house. The next section explores how this binary opposition was conceptualised.

The makeshift house

This section will consider the house, and the domestic sphere, not as a site associated solely with aesthetic beauty, morality, and “respectability,” but as a site where boundaries were managed. Interlocutors understood the house and its surroundings to reflect a gendered binary opposition¹⁹ that was considered productive, and which was characterised as threatened by women’s participation in wage labour. While wage labour has long been associated with women in Seychelles, the impact of this upon household organization has given rise to the idea of unions outside of marriage as temporary and transient.

Wilson did not speak of Caribbean “respectability” as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of a binary that included “reputation” – the world of men located outside the house, on the street and in the yard (1969:80). A similar framework was operative in Seychelles, and was summarised for me by Thelma, a middle-aged woman working within the Ministry of Education:

“When I was growing up, my family, we had – there were seven of us. So the boys had nothing to do with the house. The three girls, as the girls we had to clean the house, we had to wash clothes, learn to cook, iron the clothes, this is *our* job. But the boys had to do anything to do with the *outside*. They would clean outside, they would do the watering of plants and so on. They would get fish, they would go shopping – the girls did not go shopping, the boys would go shopping, the boys would gut the fish, clean it, get it ready [...]

So that would be specific, I remember, cleaning outside, anything that it is remotely associated with dirty things! That the boys would do. Boys would clean outside, pick up dirt and heavy things like cut wood, clean fish – all this is dirty things. The girls would keep inside, clean the house, tidy up, iron the clothes, cook the food, wash the clothes, that's what you do.”

¹⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the full diversity of gender and sexuality in Seychelles, it is important to emphasise that this was a constructed opposition. In the analysis that follows, I do not specifically address queer relationships, or gender outside this binary. During fieldwork, I did meet Seychellois (and non-Seychellois) who were part of the struggle for the national decriminalization of same-sex relationships that eventually occurred in June 2016. However, LGBTQ relationships and identities were, both before and after the repeal, generally characterised by discretion because prevailing attitudes among the straight population, while not violently homophobic, were polarised around the extent to which queerness was ‘natural.’ The idea of what is ‘natural’ in this sense forms the basis for this section.

Marion and Burton Benedict carried out their research in roughly the period that corresponds to Thelma's account (the 1960s and 1970s). Stressing what he referred to as the relative instability of Seychellois households, Burton Benedict contended that "the household is clearly the woman's domain", as it was more likely to be made up of her kin than the kin of her male partner (1982:254). The household was described as a "nucleus" from which female networks radiated and through these networks, women were able to engender obligations and manage reciprocal relationships (ibid. 258). Male networks, in contrast, existed outside the house, primarily amongst drinking companions (ibid. 263). The system benefitted women, who had control of their own income and sought to control the money brought to them by men. While men contributed financially to the house, and were responsible for large purchases such as furniture, women sought to limit male influence. What men sought (often in vain) was emotional support and connection, while

The entire female network operates apart from and, to some extent, against men. Men are necessary to support it with their earnings, but they enter into it only peripherally as brothers or sons [...] Women are not alone. Men often are (ibid. 260).

The Benedicts described households arranged in this way as "matricentric" or "matrifocal" (ibid. 104-5). These terms emphasise the extent to which "women *in their role as mothers* [...] come to be the *focus* of relationships" (Smith 1996:42, italics in original), and have been subject to sustained feminist critique for their tendency to pathologize this centrality (Blackwood 2005; Tanner 1974). However, both are etic terms; interlocutors habitually used the word "matriarchal" to describe Creole sociality, past and present. A variety of commentators - whether tourists (Chakravarti 2016), academics (Yoon 2011:105) or Seychellois clergymen (Chang-Him 2002) – have accepted this term and given it currency.

The nature of the term itself illustrates the tension surrounding domestic life and the house. "Matriarchal" makes a claim that goes beyond the household, so that male and female roles in the domestic sphere are treated as continuous with their roles in society

more broadly, and social life is understood to be dominated by women. But “matriarchy” does not simply suggest that households are female-headed or that women are active in public life; rather, it implies female dominance as a first principle (Sanday 1998:1). The location of feminine authority in a mythic past (Bamberger 1974:267) distances the Seychellois family from the violence of the plantation in the imagination of tourists and visitors. But the history endorsed by the state places qualifications on matriarchy, allowing that while female dominance is natural, it ends at the limits of the domestic.

State discourses related to “Creole values” often focused on working mothers (especially if they were single, or young) as illustrative of the moral deterioration of the nation (Ministry of Social Affairs 2014), speculating that dereliction of the maternal role had caused young men to fall behind in school and eventually become drug addicts. During my time in Seychelles, I had contact with a foreign youth NGO whose members had been told (and quite sincerely believed) that teenage pregnancy and single motherhood were new phenomena in Seychelles. Gender dynamics, wherever they were problematic, led discursively back to the house; especially for male interlocutors, who were clear that women had overstepped traditional boundaries between inside and outside. “In the past,” the artist Urny Mathiot told me, “women did not work. They stayed at home to raise the children.”

This idea that there has been a significant shift in both women’s patterns of employment, and their sexual mores, is commonplace. What is striking about these claims is that women’s orientations towards both relationships and wage labour have not changed radically, despite other changes in Seychelles over the 20th century. Historically it has been the norm for Seychellois couples to live *en menage* – in de facto unions that retain some of the character of marriage, without preserving the property relation at the centre of it (a

virtual impossibility when unions took place between people who were also property).

Likewise, it has been unusual in Seychelles for women to be confined entirely to the home or to be entirely removed from labour (waged or unwaged). The structure of households described above – their focus on women, the peripherality of men, and the antagonism arising from this – was produced in the socioeconomic context of plantation labour (both before and after abolition).

In other cultural contexts, women's work (especially when related to the domestic realm) has not always been classified as labour, and this absence of recognition has ramifications in present-day homes and workplaces (Hochschild and Machung 2003:250). This is *not* the case in Seychelles, where the plantation involved women in explicitly economic processes from the outset. In the 18th and 19th centuries, enslaved women (a majority of the female population prior to Abolition) engaged not only in arduous household-based labour, but also in forms of agricultural labour alongside men. Post-abolition, women continued to do plantation work for a nominal wage: picking cotton, and processing coconuts and cinnamon. Throughout the 20th century, women continued participation in the wage economy, working in the market, the postal service, construction, and eventually the tourist industry. Many of the women who left Seychelles did so in order to find jobs in nursing, administration, and hotels abroad. After the *koudeta*, women were permitted to join the army, and during my time in Seychelles made up a noticeable contingent there and within the police force. This participation in wage labour was accompanied by other forms of engagement with public life. In the post-*koudeta* era, female parliamentary representation reached 30 per cent without the institution of quotas (ibid. 99), though this figure has subsequently stagnated in relation to African countries that have implemented quotas (Bragante, et al. 2018:24). Nonetheless, women are well-

represented within the national legislature, and district administration (Yoon 2011:104-5), and are more likely to go on to tertiary education than men (Campling, et al. 2011:53).

As in other post-plantation economies (Freeman 2002:62-3; Mantz 2007:23; Prentice 2012:403-4), wage labour and engagement with public life have become constitutive elements of what it means to be a woman in Seychelles. While, in theory, leading a life dedicated to the home might be aspirational and associated with financial security, a woman who did not engage in wage labour might find herself subject to gossip from neighbours and relatives (especially other women). One interlocutor, Michelle, was continually criticised by her husband's relatives because she did not work outside the home, despite the fact that she provided unpaid childcare for them (an unusual arrangement, for childcare has long been understood as labour worthy of remuneration in Seychelles). I understood from the way this issue was discussed that Michelle's relatives felt that she was putting on airs. In light of the history given above, the idea that "women did not work" is not a claim about the boundaries of the house but about the boundaries of femininity. Women who stayed within the domestic sphere, removed from either chattel slavery or waged labour, would have been members of the *grann blan* elite.

The move to make such a figure stand for Seychellois women in general invokes a racial hierarchy entangled, not only with class, but with sexuality. The emphasis on hygiene within the context of the colonial house involved the maintenance of racial boundaries; white women's work was to keep the house metaphorically free of racial pollution – a cleanliness evident in the standards of presentation maintained throughout (Tsing 2012:150). Such standards reinforced the idea of European companionate marriage as an archetype of intimacy and love (Povinelli 2006:17), but they were not the norm. For women who worked, whether they were enslaved, indentured, or labourers, sex had

economic aspects and material consequences; it was often something they were involved in whether they wished to be or not.

Echoing Carol Stack's analysis of black American working class families (1974:128), the Benedicts understood sexual relationships in Seychelles as a feminine economic strategy that extended networks. Their female informants were frank about sex and the age at which their daughters were likely to become interested in it; one woman is described as having set aside a room in the house where her daughter could entertain boyfriends privately (1982:62). Through intimate relationships, especially if they resulted in children, women created bonds of obligation that men both sought out and tried to avoid, so that the male presence within households was continually fluctuating (ibid. 260). Masculine peripherality was therefore the product of a tension between feminine networks and masculine avoidance. I would suggest that a productive way of considering this avoidance is the framework proposed by Miller in relation to Trinidad in the 1980s. Miller describes sexuality and property – both idioms through which relationships between genders were expressed (1994:192) – as existing in antipathy to one another (ibid. 193). Sexuality was characterised by its “transience” - not only impermanence, but freedom and disorder (ibid. 126) – while property and the house ensured the “transcendence” of the family through its association with heritable objects (ibid. 107). Men were thus cautious about entering into transient sexual attachments that might become concretised through the house and its effects, while women were able to “monitor” the relationship by keeping men at a distance (ibid. 194).

State *kreolite* allows that female pragmatism and male peripherality exist in the present, but seeks to reimagine the past as a time when Creole values produced stable, harmonious, legally recognised marriages. It is possible that in the 19th and 20th centuries, a

“double standard” of the kind recognised by Wilson in the Caribbean meant that male promiscuity was considered to demonstrate virility, while chastity and fidelity were required of women (1969:71, 77). However, the existence of such a standard is not possible to ascertain from the available evidence: *moutya* lyrics (Parent 2018:351), folktales (Haring 2007:155-6), old jokes and accounts of life in the islands (Veevers-Carter 1970:198) are full of sexual intrigue in which women were often portrayed as active participants and instigators rather than passive objects. In the present day, my own interlocutors were sanguine about relationships between men and women and their changeability; it was an accepted truism that men and women were often unfaithful to one another, and that this was natural.

However, it is clear that modern state *kreolite* implements a “double standard,” through the construction of a past in which female chastity and naiveté were a necessary precondition for romantic love and conjugal harmony. During my fieldwork, this was especially obvious during Festival Kreol and particular in *Tifin*²⁰ – an annual staged “traditional Creole wedding” at which two tourists played the role of bride and groom, while elderly Seychellois volunteered to play the role of their family members. This event was developed during the SPPF era, and is now explicitly marketed to visitors to the islands. In the 2016 event, which I attended, it was accompanied by an exhibition on traditional courtship and the launch of a book on the same topic (Moka 2016). The author, Lenstiti Kreol researcher Cindy Moka explained to me the complex series of permissions that had to be sought by a young man before he attained his sweetheart’s hand in marriage. Before the two were even allowed to be in the same room (albeit with chaperones), he would have needed to write a letter expressing his interest to her family and produce a basket woven

²⁰ A word that literally means ‘little drink; aperitif,’ in reference to the sweet liqueurs served at such an event.

from palm leaves. He would fill this basket with produce to demonstrate his ability to provide. There would be several chaperoned meetings, until eventually both man and woman would be left alone together. In a practice known as *roul pomme d'amour*,²¹ the two would-be lovers would toss a tomato to one another while speaking loudly enough that their parents (in the next room) could hear every word. If conversation ceased or the tomato dropped, this would be enough to alert the parents to sexual misbehaviour.

²¹ 'Rolling the apple of love.'



Figure 22. John Vital and band providing music for *laserenad* ('the serenade', a procession from church to town hall) as part of the Tifin wedding event. Figure 23. (bottom): 'bride' and 'groom' (two German tourists on their honeymoon) seated with Minister Alain St Ange (centre) while members of the press photograph the event. Photographs by Mairi O'Gorman (2016).

While Moka's work draws specifically on 19th and early 20th century archival sources (as well as the life-histories of Seychellois elders), it was enfolded into state presentation of a halcyon era of "traditional life" that existed just within living memory. The delicacy of this vision was at odds with the experiences of my female interlocutors of various generations, for whom youthful ignorance of sex (if it had been possible to maintain) had sometimes been dangerous, and this danger will be explored further in Chapter 4. Here, I wish to suggest that the role of outsiders in constituting such self-stereotypes has always been important, and that this has ramifications for both the material and emotional makeup of the house.

The state's eagerness to display this romantic past must be understood in relation to a prurient strain in outsider accounts of Seychellois sexual morality, which interlocutors working within culture and heritage continued to experience as shameful. Ozanne, first Anglican archbishop of the islands, allowed that Seychellois girls were not "immoral" – since they had no conception of sexual morality, they were clearly "amoral" (1936:139-40). This remarkable assertion was still being quoted comparatively recently, though what Ozanne termed the "crushing handicap" of métissage (ibid. 140) had been transformed into an exotic, desirable mix of pleasing characteristics (Franda 1982:43). The idea of the sexually free-spirited Creole girl was packaged for tourist consumption throughout the late 20th century, in images of beauty queens, and in the 1977 film *Goodbye Emmanuelle* (set in Seychelles). Beauty contests and advertising continue to utilise this visual vocabulary, in which country and body, island and "dark flesh" (hooks 1992:27) are made available to foreign consumers. The air of condescension sometimes evident in outside accounts of Seychellois relationships seems to spring from a sense on the part of European and American observers that money could be exchanged for expressions of fidelity, care or love (Veevers-Carter 1970:63), and that such expressions did not have to be taken seriously.

Through the romantic notion of traditional courtship, the Ministry was able to develop a self-stereotype of the nation as intrinsically respectable. In the process, older self-stereotypes were repressed.

The changing house

This section will argue that the idea of a change in the ideal gendered order of the house must be viewed through intersecting shifts in patterns of accommodation, fathering and work. The tourist economy of Seychelles required many of my male interlocutors to participate in forms of work that conflicted with the values traditionally associated with masculinity.

The idea that the change in the house was partly to do with the form of accommodation emerged most clearly in conversation with Thelma. Like other interlocutors, she felt that the gendered balance of the house had changed, but this was because “people live in flats... there is less to do with the outside.” This shift to living in modern buildings with gardens, verandas, or a spacious yard had rendered the old masculine role untenable, as the kinds of work that men did around the home were no longer possible.

At the same time, like other female interlocutors, she had noticed a change in how young men fathered their children. She recalled that when her children were young, she had left Seychelles to find work in the UK. Since the children were toddlers, her husband was obliged to take them to the hospital for regular health checks. Laughing, she recalled that a nurse had bluntly inquired, “These children don’t have a mother?” In contrast, she said, it was now normal for men to take on these kinds of fatherly duties. This resonated

with my own experiences – my male relatives accompanied their children to medical appointments and extra-curricular activities, and often picked them up from school.

However, it is worth remaining cautious of the historical claim about fatherhood represented here. The historical peripherality of Seychellois fathers depends on one's point of view, and it is perhaps less the case that Seychellois men have been absent than that their presence has been understood in ways that are inflected by class and race. An archetypal, stern-yet-loving paterfamilias – either white, or described in terms of proximity to European refinement – is a feature of the memoirs of famous or influential Seychellois men (Ferrari 1999:14; Mancham 1983:22). John Etienne, scion of a *grann blan* family, stressed his father's influence on his development – his attending a British rather than French school, his knowledge of sailing and the ocean, and his sense of environmental stewardship of the Seychelles islands. Fathers who were planters, or who worked in clerical and professional jobs, were historically more present within the familial home, and part of companionate conjugality in a way that corresponded with their social status.

The majority of Seychellois men did not have the means to fulfil such a role. During slavery, the gendered structure of plantation labour militated against it; after Abolition, waged employment often distanced men spatially from their homes and families. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was common for Seychellois men to work as labourers on plantations on the Outer Islands, as well as on Mahé. Fishing was also a common source of income for many men throughout this period, and the Benedicts speculated that it was “the ideal male occupation for a Seychellois” because “a fisherman is his own boss, pitted against the elements and dependent on the luck of the catch, not on the whim of an employer,” able to set his own prices and control his wage (1982:187). In the Caribbean, similar modes of employment contributed to the individualistic values

designated “reputation,” or characterised by “transience”; fishing, in Seychelles, remains valorised in the popular imaginary for similar reasons. Yet it is important to note that not all men were always absent from the home; rather, when they were present as caregivers, this was characterised as the product of poverty and necessity (Benedict and Benedict 1982:30).

The fact that men do not perform a “traditional” masculine role in relation to the household is not only a product of changes in the physical form of the house, but is related to larger transformations of the employment market. As luxury tourism has assumed increasing importance, a larger proportion of the population (both male and female) have been employed within the service economy, doing work that has been coded as feminine in Seychelles and in the wider world. It is also common for men to do informal work within the tourist economy – as guides, or as *pirat* (“pirate”) taxi drivers. While these latter jobs preserve some of the individualistic quality of fishing or day-labouring – as the men who do them are able to determine their own hours and rates – they, like other jobs within tourism, involve the commodification of emotional labour (Hochschild 1983:185).

Seychellois are generally aware of themselves as ‘representing’ the tourist industry both at work and outside it. Male interlocutors who had multiple occasions and were on the lookout for occasional work were called upon to behave graciously towards foreigners, who were unlikely to acknowledge the fact that they were being treated with special care. “Enhancing the status and well-being of others,” Hochschild has argued is

an unseen effort, which, like housework, does not quite count as labor but is nevertheless crucial to getting other things done. As with doing housework well, the trick is to erase any evidence of effort, to offer only the clean house and the welcoming smile. (ibid. 167)

Interlocutors were often reluctant to speak negatively of tourists, except via an extended critique of ‘development,’ but the strain of exaggerated courtesy was quietly apparent.

Charles, an artist, had multiple occupations, among them a job at a resort, teaching the children of guests to paint turtles and palm trees. I was surprised by how stressful he found this work – for one thing, he told me, the paintings produced by the children had to be “good.”

“Parents don’t want to see bad paintings,” he said, with a wry smile.

For another, he had to work ceaselessly, not even sitting while the children worked, as he was concerned that the hotel managers could check up on him via CCTV. While I would agree with accounts of tourism in the former plantation world that emphasise material continuity between tourism and the plantation (Strachan 2002:110) here I want to emphasise the continuity of hotel work with work in the house. Despite working physically outside the house and being self-employed in a way typically valorised by Seychellois men, Charles was nonetheless immersed in an environment in which he had to meet visible standards of behaviour and comportment, to care for children, and to manage his own emotions in relation to his work.

The existence of artist-patron relations means that emotion work is an established element within art practice; the fact that such relations draw on older histories of employment and reciprocal obligation (see Chapter 2) highlights the way men’s work has historically contained this tension. Nonetheless, it was at odds with how male artists wished to see themselves. This was most visible in the tension between men and women and the way that it was expressed as a distinction between art and craft.

Male interlocutors frequently spoke of women as domineering, manipulative and acquisitive, perhaps not anticipating where my own sympathies would lie.²² Female artists

²² This was likely a reflection of the extent to which I was considered European rather than Seychellois, and of the class-based assumptions encoded in colourism (see **Archipelago**); but male

are less widely known than male artists, both in the present day and historically.²³ Men who taught art speculated that many of their female former students had prioritised starting a family over their artistic careers. There was a widespread perception that women, being more pragmatic than men, simply did not see art as a sensible way to earn money. But pragmatism could itself be cast as negative. While, as I have explained in Chapter 1, the use of traditional techniques by male artists was characterised as “archival”, women who used the same techniques were relegated to the realm of “craft.” The gendered nature of this distinction emerged starkly in the IP workshop (Chapter 2), where a male artist differentiated between small-scale creative activities carried out by women in order to augment their household income, and the kind of “real” art that requires special legal protections. Art existed to some extent within an individualistic realm of masculine daring, while craft was a process of generating objects in order to obtain money to purchase more objects.

When I told Leonard, a middle-aged visual artist, that I thought stereotypes of domineering wives unfair on women, he laughed. “But women oppress men with the size of their bodies,” he chided, as though I had missed an important detail. He complained that when he travelled by bus, he was always squashed into his seat by the overweight women who surrounded him. “All a woman cares about,” he said, “is that you feed her and give her a house. As long as you give her food, she doesn’t care about anything else.”

and female interlocutors also engaged in this kind of talk both as a form of teasing and as an expression displeasure.

²³ It is important to note that Martin Kennedy’s recent book, *Art in Seychelles – Then and Now* (2017), has attempted a balanced view of both historical and contemporary art in Seychelles; when I interviewed Kennedy, he was clear that women like Jeanne D’Offay ought to be recognised for their contributions, and praised work by present-day artists like Marie-May Marie. But this balanced approach must be understood in relation to the broader context outlined above.

The desire for material stability was portrayed by male interlocutors as fundamentally conservative, unimaginative and acquisitive, the antithesis of Creole inventiveness. However, it is worth noting that – in the same way that “transience” was not automatically masculine, but part of a dualist tendency in which both Trinidadian men and women were implicated (Miller 1994:15) – such inventiveness is not inherently masculine. Throughout this chapter, it has been evident that many of the forms (aesthetic and emotional) that are important to state *kreolite* and a fixed Creole past were originally conceived of as temporary. Women, like men, have historically had to adapt to the changing fortunes of Seychelles, and the aesthetics of the home are evidence of these negotiations. The idea of women as unimaginative is not a simple patriarchal erasure of women’s labour and the demands made upon them by circumstance; it is also partly an attempt to revalue a heroic, individualistic mode of masculinity (that is further explored in Chapter 5). As such, it is underwritten by concerns about the legitimacy of the Creole family in the context of plantation life.

This chapter has argued that while the concept of ‘home’ is useful for understanding familial dynamics within transnational migration, for Seychellois the specific materiality of the house is implicated in the kinds of values that make up *kreolite*. Approaching houses via their appearances and aesthetics reveals their tendency toward mutability and change, and the movement between the temporary and the permanent that takes place within them. The house concretises ideas of gendered difference that are significant within state *kreolite* because they form the basis of an attempt to render Creole ways of living as fixed, and permanent, but this attempt remains haunted by the idea of their ephemerality. This sense of temporariness is explored further in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Disappearances: The Dirty House

*Pa soufle
dan lakaz aswar
i port mofin*

Don't blow
in the house at night
it brings ill luck

*Pa kas laglas
i port
set an martir*

Don't break the glass
it brings
seven years' suffering

*Pa mars avek ou lanmen
lo ou latet
ou manman i a mor*

Don't walk with your hand
on your head
your mother is dead

From the poem *Bann keksoz mon manman ti dir mwan* (Things my mother told me),

(Pierre-Louis 2012:6)

The previous chapter described an idealised boundary between 'inside' and 'outside' prevalent among interlocutors and implicit in state engagements with history. This boundary was conceptualised partly in terms of cleanliness (as well as sexual hygiene) and, following from that framing, this chapter will explore what cleaning the house (or the domestic, the feminine, the respectable) means in terms of what is removed or left out. It will consider this at the level of quotidian experiences of household strife and discord, as well as in relation to the history of the family in Seychelles. While failing to present a clean appearance could make one subject to *kankan* (gossip), gossip could be the basis for a range of further possible harms – emotional, political, and occult – realised through the intimacy and proximity of the househousehold, and on the interior as a place of secrecy. At the root of this was the idea that families are harmful, and that Creole families are particularly dysfunctional – an idea informed by racialised structures in public life from the plantation onward.

Dirty things

This section will describe processes of removal and concealment at the level of physical objects in the home – a practice that is not only commonplace but also fraught, as it is treated as both necessary and wasteful. Disposal of household items was stigmatised partly through the idea of ‘ingratitude’ – a political relationship that had its roots in plantation history, as well as the more recent history of the SPPF era. It was experienced as particularly stressful for artists who, through their use of waste materials, emblematised an ideal Creole resourcefulness.

While the previous chapter focused on the processes of cleaning and decorating the house, it was not only important to be able to fill a house with certain kinds of objects, but also to be rid of household items once they had served their purpose. With the notable exception of the magazine *Buy and Sell* (and its accompanying Facebook group), there were few mechanisms for disposal of household items without dumping them, especially if they were no longer functional. If it was simply the case that one household was upgrading an appliance, the unwanted item might be passed on to family members. While households within one extended family are often in close geographic proximity to one another, due to the patterns of land use created by the inheritance system, proximity was more about the intimacy of the relationship than physical closeness.

White goods and old furniture were often left by the side of the road, where other discarded objects would accumulate around them, to the chagrin of environmentalists. State-led attempts to reduce this litter were not particularly successful, and interlocutors worried more about the possibility of rubbish creating ideal conditions for mosquitoes and the spread of mosquito-borne chikungunya than about generalised harm to the

environment. Despite the commonplace nature of fly-tipping, interlocutors did feel concern about waste, and it was a common conversational trope that Seychellois generally have too much (implicitly because it has been provided to them by the government), and that discarded objects show a lack of gratitude for this abundance. This attitude was derived from an earlier era of SPPF discourse, when René had asked, “Why do we waste things like that? Is it that when we get all these things free of charge we believe they do not belong to us? If only when we realized that when we waste things we are harming ourselves. We are stealing from ourselves” (1984:67).

The state engaged with waste in several ways – objects that did become landfill were incorporated into land reclamation.²⁴ But recycling was encouraged, and situated within a framework of Creole values (Martin 2007), appealing to a sense of national resourcefulness in order to encourage creative repurposing of waste. For artists and craftspeople, the need for this kind of resourcefulness was obvious and resonated with their sense of identity as creators. Many artists were particularly irritated by a waste of what they saw as useful materials, and repurposed these objects when they could. Recycling was inspired by concern for the environment, and underwritten by the difficulty and expense of purchasing materials otherwise; often, pieces of wood and board were used in place of canvases, or carved and etched to produce relief works.

The state therefore had the option of utilising the work of artists towards a more generalised environmental (and moral) project. At the end of July 2016, the National Arts Council invited Krishna Luchoomun (head of the Mauritian art association pArtage) to deliver a week-long conceptual art workshop to Seychellois artists. Influential older artists such as Emmanuel D’Offay and Peter Pierre-Louis were concerned that no one in Seychelles

²⁴ This suggests, given the emphasis on hygiene in the framework outlined in the previous chapter, one possible source for the stigmatisation of reclaimed land.

was engaging with abstract art, assemblage or installation, and this concern was magnified by the possibility that in 2017 there would be a Biennale des Seychelles. Throughout the 1990s, there had been a series of such biennial competitions – all of which had been complicated by the lack of an official exchange rate for the Seychelles rupee, and what some perceived as embarrassing provincialism on the part of Seychellois artists. With a possible international event looming, it became imperative that artists of all generations engage with international art trends. The public nature of the installations produced would also mean that the public could see the value of recycling household objects.

After brainstorming sessions, the group of artists travelled to the dump in order to collect materials, and subsequently produced a set of installations around the National Cultural Centre site. The group had been instructed to think conceptually, to address what they saw as topics that were normally difficult to address, such as drink-driving and domestic violence. It was one of the few events I attended where the words “traditional life” did not feature, but many of the works either utilised traditional techniques in some way (Marie-May Marie’s piece involved beading a mat made from coconut fibre), or addressed the idea of abandonment of Creole values. Several pieces expressed this through plant materials and plant imagery – Urny Mathiot and Jude Ally stacked fire extinguishers around a tree to create a piece that they called *The Tree of Life*, stating that their inspiration was a global sense of emergency, environmental and political. Meanwhile Nigel Henri, Philip Volcere and Robert Alexis produced an installation entitled *SX3*, intended to draw attention to the ongoing nature of sex trafficking and its relationship with older forms of slavery. This latter work was controversial. For members of the public, the installations had appeared suddenly around the NCC premises, with no explanation as to what they were or what they meant, which fuelled speculation that *SX3* was a malign occult act (an idea that will be addressed in the section on Afterlives).



Figure 24. (top): *The Tree of Life*, by Urny Mathiot and Jude Ally. Figure 25. (bottom): *SX3*, by Nigel Henri, Philip Volcere and Robert Alexis. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

There were points of correspondence between difficult objects and difficult topics, as both could compromise an idealised *kreolite*. The Swiss artist Suzanne Greber was not a participant in the workshop, but her visit to Seychelles coincided with it. She sought to collaborate with Seychellois artists on a project about violence against women, drawing on similar projects in other African countries, for which female participants were asked to write their stories of domestic abuse on second-hand men's shirts. The women would be photographed wearing the shirts, and these images would become the basis for exhibitions and workshops. In Seychelles, she had spoken to Christine Chetty-Payet, whose own work is textile-based and explicitly feminist, and together they had identified two possible barriers: firstly, a reluctance on the part of Seychellois to discuss domestic violence in an artistic context, and secondly, an absence of second-hand white shirts. Suzanne could not quite believe that this was the case; surely there had to be second-hand clothes in the market, sold in bales as they were in so many other countries she had visited? But it was true, she realised, and so she was faced with either an arduous attempt to encourage donations of shirts, or using a cheap brand-new alternative (which would compromise the message of the work).

Despite the value that many Seychellois women place on being able to respond to trends quickly, and the turnover of clothes within the average wardrobe, second-hand clothing is not common (outside the circulation of clothing within family units). Part of this was no doubt pragmatic, as certain types of clothing simply wore out quickly in the heat and humidity, but it was also linked to a general understanding that the ways in which things could safely be reused were limited. This was not only true for clothes, but for any objects that were closely associated with their owner.

This was apparent within my own family, as well as among my interlocutors more widely. Granny Cecile's death (in early 2015, almost a year before my arrival in Seychelles) became the catalyst for a series of negotiations around her belongings and person that, at first, seemed opaque. My mother had been dismayed that when she tried to express her grief, our relatives in Seychelles often changed the subject with a pat remark about "moving on" or "getting over the past." When I first discussed the idea of moving to Granny's house with Uncle Terence, he was apprehensive. "There's nothing there," he said. This puzzled me. I had visited Uncle Frank while he'd stayed at the house, and had seen that the living room was more or less as I remembered it from childhood. The sideboard and two wooden wall units overflowed with china and photographs²⁵; I looked for the image of the President that I was sure would be there, and found him on a commemorative clock, shaking hands with Pope Benedict.

When I finally moved in, two months later, I found that Terence had been quite honest with me. The house was empty and in disrepair, and my grandmother's possessions had been removed, so that there was little evidence that she had ever been there. I assumed that this was the result of tensions within the family and thought no more of it.

²⁵ Including a picture of my paternal grandmother's house in England, a house within a house.



Figure 26. The living room at my grandmother's house. Photograph by Mairi O'Gorman (2016).

But Rayna's experience of her own mother's death had been similarly impacted by this need to remove objects associated with the deceased. Once, while visiting, I complimented her on her living room. The walls were covered with brightly-coloured stencilled flowers, among which photographs of her brothers, sisters and late mother (printed on cartridge paper) appeared to bloom. She told me that several people had expressed disapproval at her keeping these photos, as well as objects belonging to her mother, so prominently displayed; it was considered to be bad luck. "But Mummy has only been gone for six years; and I miss her; and it's *my* house. It's none of their business what I do."

The exact nature of the bad luck that Rayna referred to is complex, as will be evident throughout this chapter. Here, I wish only to point out that the relationship between objects and the person who owns them could be dangerous to others, and that unwanted objects were not circulated far beyond family networks, i.e. those acquainted

with the object's owner. For an outsider, acquiring an object without knowledge of its provenance would be risky in the extreme.

Kankan

Having indicated that the appearances of houses and people provoked *kankan* (gossip) (in Chapter 3), this section will interrogate its circulation and consequences in greater detail. Gossip was neither trivial nor simply a neutral process of policing boundaries, but could articulate the unspeakable and dangerous from within the confines of the respectable. It cannot, however, be understood as simply a mechanism for regulating conflict; importantly, it was often ineffective, and exacerbated tensions. Through its intersection with the political, it could suggest another order of disappearances and removals in relation to the state.

Anthropologists have tended to take gossip seriously, and to assert its social importance, not least because of the energy expended upon it in a diverse array of ethnographic contexts. Evans-Pritchard was aware that for his Zande informants "all unkind words and malicious actions and innuendoes [were] stored in the memory for retaliation" (1937:46). Structural functionalist approaches attempted to develop a grand theory of gossip – for Gluckman, it had an important purpose as a means of regulating socially acceptable behaviour (1963:307) amongst intimates, and thus promoting group cohesion (ibid. 311). But this explanation privileges unity and the collective when "it is the individual and not the community that gossips" (Paine 1967:280-1); Paine characterised gossip instead as a form of "informal" communication (ibid. 283). Hannerz, similarly, considered gossip a way of maintaining social networks across distances that precluded

face to face interaction (1967:56). Gossip has historically fulfilled this role in Seychelles, as part of the networks of communication that spread between houses (1982:255).

For my own interlocutors, gossip was part of a self-stereotype; Seychellois were virtuosos of rumour, innuendo and scandal. Though George Camille was relieved, on arriving in London, that strangers did not care how he looked (see 'Cleaning the house') gossip plays a significant role within transnational networks of those who already know one another (Dreby 2009). For Jeffery's Chagossian interlocutors, gossip was the product of a distinctly Creole mentality that became worse in the "land of twitching lace curtains" (Jeffery 2010b:1109), where standards of dress and behaviour were permissible that would have been unthinkable in Mauritius (ibid. 1108). Similarly, my London-based interlocutors sometimes indicated that gossip and the sense that private affairs were everyone's business prevented them from engaging with the Seychellois community as much as they would otherwise have liked to. The relatively small size of the diaspora meant that longer histories often played a role in the decision to engage (or not) with another Seychellois living in the UK, and made it possible for small resentments to accumulate and ultimately sour relationships. It was only through these networks of prior acquaintance that the community survived, as *bal Seselwa* were publicised through word of mouth as much as more formal methods of advertisement. But at *bal Seselwa*, attendees both recognised old acquaintances and made snap visual judgements about who was drunk, who was ill-dressed, who might be having an affair. *Kankan* is thus a phenomenon that extends the boundaries of the house transnationally (Dreby 2009; Geschiere 2013:22).

The subjects of gossip were not only those who knew, and understood, Seychellois morals and standards of presentation. When I talked with Anthony, a middle-aged man who had once been my grandmother's tenant, he remarked, "So you've come here to do

research. Maybe you'll be able to tell me why Seychellois are so *kankan*." I asked what he meant, and he explained that he had studied abroad at a university that was popular with young Seychellois, and that in his first year he had befriended other young people from all over the world. When a group of Seychellois arrived in his second year he discovered that "these foreign people I liked, my friends, were really bad people. Of course, I sided with my countrymen against them. And it was only later that I realised that I never had a problem with any of these people before the Seychellois arrived."

Throughout my time in Seychelles, my presence, and the fact that I asked questions, made me a participant in gossip rather than a passive listener – for to listen to gossip is to participate in its circulation. Anthropologists are often implicated in the spread of gossip; Gluckman, noting "that the Greek Lexicon defines "an anthropologist" not as "anthropos plus logos," a "student of man," but only as "a scandalmonger,"" described gaining familiarity with scandal as part of ethnographic method (1963:314). I was also a member of a family about whom my interlocutors already had established ideas, and was party to the gossip that circulated within my family network. I knew too that I was sometimes the subject of gossip, even in relation to apparently trivial details of my appearance. During the first few months of my visit, friends and interlocutors remarked on the frequency with which I wore black, and asked me why. I assumed that this was because they found my clothes drab, in comparison to the bright colours favoured by young Seychellois women my age, and (rather than try to justify my own tastes) explained that I thought dark colours practical in a damp, humid climate. An alternative explanation only suggested itself when I interviewed Colette, a young woman working in the media. She had lived and studied in the UK, and, during the course of a conversation about Edinburgh castle, remarked that goth aesthetics appealed to her. I replied that I had never seen a Seychellois goth. Colette frowned; she recalled that there had been a man known for

wearing black clothes, who people said worshipped the devil (not entirely baselessly – a TV interview that he had given had added fuel to this theory).

“For Seychellois,” she laughed, “even wearing black means you’re a devil-worshipper, so there will never be any Seychellois goths.”

While I would not argue, on the strength of this conversation, that my Seychellois interlocutors believed that I worshipped the devil, it was conceivable to me that they asked in case I was prepared to give such an answer.²⁶ In thinking through the appraisal of appearances that made up part of Chapter 3, I am interested in the way that *kankan*, via innuendo, leaves space for the unthinkable to be articulated and publicly circulated; it blends the trivial and the serious in ways that encourage circulation. Gossip unfolds at the intersection of what is said and what remains unsaid (White 1994:85). Its ambiguity, its unfolding in private and through subtle nuances of facial expression and eye contact, can render it simultaneously trivial and harmful.

For Martin Kennedy, a British artist living in Seychelles, this made it easy to shake off. During August 2016, I attended a meeting of ARTerial which, alongside the National Arts Council and SEYLAR, is one of the major artists’ associations in Seychelles. It is part of a pan-African network of organizations and, in its outlook, markedly forward-looking. The organizers attribute this to the fact that they are unaffiliated with the state and not as heavily involved in state *kreolite*. Their headquarters is George Camille’s Sunstroke Studio, a modern building with air-conditioned offices and a bright, spacious studio on the first floor. I observed a meeting where most of the discussion focused on an upcoming coffee table book on art in Seychelles, and negotiations around which artists were influential or

²⁶ I consider it likely that this, too, was linked to my whiteness, as the uneven distribution of global wealth forms part of the basis for New World Order mythologies that conflate whiteness and Satanism.

talented enough to include. Because the book was intended to be definitive, it was necessary to separate personal animus from artistic critique, but gossip permeated much of the conversation. Kennedy (the main author) and other members of the group were, furthermore, aware that their choices would be questioned by a wider community of artists and collectors. In particular, the choice of artist for the cover of the book was fraught. Kennedy suggested Michael Adams, a Kenya-born Briton, who was successful, influential, and not a member of the association, which would have the advantage of “reducing *kaka* [crap].”

“*Kankan!*” several people corrected him.

“That too,” he said, laughing. “But then I’m listening if you think there is a real risk that people will say, ‘Michael Adams isn’t a real Seychellois.’ I know how it works, you know, I have the passport but I know I’m not a real Seychellois and people will never regard me as one. So if you think there’s a political dimension...”

Later that week, I interviewed Kennedy individually. A tall, white-haired, middle-aged Englishman, his demeanour seemed shaped by his years as an art teacher, his answers clear and carefully articulated. I asked him how much of a problem *kankan* posed for the book, as I was aware in the meeting the discussion of gossip had pertained to the contentious realm of party politics and national identity. He waved this away. “I gave up a long time ago even wondering what people might say in private about what I do, or what the school does... I only deal with a formal approach.”

The fact that gossip was a concealed, self-sustaining process meant that Kennedy did not take it seriously or internalise it. This was perhaps a product of his identity as an outsider, because for several Seychellois interlocutors, it was the indirect nature of gossip – as well as its overlap with party politics – that made it violent and intrusive.

Vania had been born in Seychelles, and had lived abroad for some time before returning to the islands. An outgoing, gregarious woman from a large family, she had a wide network of friends and acquaintances abroad and in Seychelles. “I know everyone,” she told me. “I know who is who, who their parents are, even when they don’t know themselves!” Despite her friendliness and the fact that she was well-liked, Vania sometimes struggled with her return to Seychelles and worried that she had caused her husband (who was not Seychellois) unnecessary emotional distress through relocating. They both encountered *kankan*, some of it within her kinship network, some of it outside. During my time in Seychelles, she was embroiled in a quarrel with her neighbours.

“People assume things,” she said. “They assume they know about you when they don’t know anything about you.” Her neighbours assumed that she was a Parti Lepep supporter, because many of her friends and professional contacts were. As the neighbours were LDS supporters, they had begun a campaign of harassment against her. They played music (especially the opposition hit song, “*Pil Lo Li*”) at antisocial hours, and the rubbish from their property sometimes spilled over onto hers. Their children were rude to her.²⁷ For Vania, it was the fact that this dynamic had arisen from nothing, and that there was no way of reversing it, that was distressing.

It was not unusual to have a hostile relationship of this sort with one’s neighbours, and politics was oftentimes a complicating factor, especially when houses were decorated to signal party allegiance at election time. The aggression of neighbours could itself be a political act, and some interlocutors (particularly if they were opposition supporters) would emphasised the political dimension and term it “victimization” (though Vania did not). The

²⁷ Children were often encouraged to behave in this way when adults were fighting; given the emphasis on children’s politeness at other times, it should not be hard to see why it would be hurtful.

idea of victimization (which is explored further in Chapter 5) had arisen during the post-*koudeta* era, when everyday neighbourly nosiness had overlapped with state surveillance. This period was characterised by disappearances and removals that were both facilitated by and subsequently enshrined in gossip. The government of the time had surveilled citizens via wire-tapping (see **Archipelago**), while neighbours had sometimes utilised proximity to inform on one another. A number of opposition supporters, and critics of the government were reported missing by friends and family members, and though this phenomenon has not continued into the present day, these disappearances remain in the public consciousness. The periodic discovery of bodily remains in Seychelles, where they are not explicitly identified with the pirate histories discussed in Chapter 2, prompts speculation about the ultimate fate of these individuals (Tirant 2016). While it has been argued, in relation to other Indian Ocean disappearances – of islands themselves, as well as people passing through them – that disappearances challenge “static” state power (Baldacchino 2018:94), this instance is one in which the extent of state power to exclude, imprison, exile, or worse (ibid. 102) is apparent. Though the present-day government, under President Danny Faure, has made efforts to address this chapter of national history (State House 2018), and people of widely differing political sympathies now live alongside one another, the history of disappearances has come to invisibly saturate the house and the domestic sphere.

Uncle Richard managed the house at Belonie in ways that suggested its vulnerability to gossip and politics. Though he was not deeply invested in the latter, he carefully mounted a modest-sized picture of the Parti Lepep candidate to the outside wall of the house during the National Assembly elections. Through such decorations, the “apparatus of state finds ways of getting into its subjects’ most intimate spaces” (Mbembe 1992:19); in Seychelles this occurred not only through expressions of fealty, but through

silences and omissions. In the same way that no one talked politics over the phone, care was taken over what was said within rooms that faced onto the street. Richard claimed that Uncle Frank would never get his Seychelles citizenship,²⁸ because he had once stood by the gate of the house and watched an opposition rally pass by, and muttered, “Fucking government” under his breath. A neighbour had supposedly heard and reported him.

Indirect aggression was employed as a strategy by feuding neighbours or family members – though it was never obvious whether passive aggression was intended to resolve the conflict or further inflame it, and either outcome was possible. Circulating rumours about someone, leaving waste on their land, and snubbing them in public were common ways of expressing displeasure. Households often blasted loud music as a matter of course, without ill intent. But sometimes this was done pointedly, and I was privy such conflicts between relatives and neighbours around the property at Belonie. The Benedicts describe a kind of “public shaming” employed by Seychellois during their fieldwork: two people would gossip loudly and obviously about a third party on the street, never using the person’s name but making it quite clear who they were talking about, usually in the presence of this person (1982:208). I saw this happen several times, and witnessed it spill over into a physical altercation once. Shaming was hurtful precisely because there few available responses that did not run the risk of escalating the situation. But there were forms of aggression that were still more indirect, and less obviously traceable.

“Another thing they do,” Vania said of her neighbours, “is they put coins. They bury them in the soil around the property. It’s black magic. My husband found some the other

²⁸ Several members of my family, as Kenya-borns who had left Seychelles in the period preceding Independence, were not naturalised citizens and were attempting to navigate the citizenship regime described in Chapter 1.

day, and I told him not to touch them, but he was so angry – he picked them up and threw them away.”

A few months prior to this conversation, I had found coins buried in a flowerbed at my grandmother’s house. I had created the bed from scratch and knew that someone else must have been responsible, but assumed at the time that they had been buried by one of the neighbour children as a game. I felt my face turn ashen, but I was reluctant to tell Vania about this, because I knew she would assure me that it *was* black magic and that I ought not to have touched them. So instead, thinking of George Camille, I said, “I sometimes feel exhausted from worrying what people think about me here. I worry that I’ll say the wrong thing to the wrong person, or that someone will hear me in the house or on the phone. I suppose if I had grown up here, I’d be used to it.”

Vania laughed. “No,” she said, “what you’re feeling is what everyone feels all the time here.”

Grigri and malfezans

Narratives in which *kankan* develops into black magic (*grigri* in Kreol) are commonly circulated in Seychelles. *Grigri* occupies an ambivalent position in relation to state *kreolite*, where it is both associated with positively-valued traditions and with negatively-valued ‘superstition.’ It is linked to *kankan* both causally and in its underlying logic, as both are vehicles for expression of the malign intentions (*malfezans*) of intimate others. Through the story of one *sorsye* (witch), this section will address the way that the textual objects associated with *grigri* facilitate intimate forms of harm by materialising what would otherwise be arcane knowledge.

Grigri refers, in Seychelles, to a diverse set of practices. It is both traditional and modern and, while it is associated with the private sphere, has been drawn on in public ways as part of the national self-image. In the 20th century, it was characterised as a private, covert preoccupation of Seychellois that often remained opaque to outsiders (Benedict and Benedict 1982:44; Taylor 2005:426) – Ozanne called it a “hotch-potch of popery and voodooism that baffles any attempt at scientific examination” (1936:107) – but which nonetheless had the power to influence their health and wellbeing. Marion Benedict found that it was largely only possible to learn about witchcraft obliquely and incrementally, because there was a widespread condemnation of witchcraft practices even as many Seychellois engaged in them (Benedict and Benedict 1982:35). As described in the literature, these practices were structured around experts of various kinds – especially the *bonnonm dibwa* (‘man of the woods’) – who possessed arcane knowledge and could thus both engender and prevent misfortune in the lives of ordinary people. Often this knowledge was based on herbal medicine, and this was the primary focus of the Benedicts’ understanding of witchcraft (Benedict and Benedict 1982:66). Innuendo surrounding unexplained deaths and disappearances was sometimes linked by Seychellois to the idea that witch-doctors also possessed knowledge of life after death and the ability to commune with or command the dead to carry out their bidding (Ozanne 1936:110-1).

However, during my fieldwork it appeared that herbal medicine was to some extent decoupled from *grigri*, though the term “*bonnonm dibwa*” often connoted knowledge of both. The Ministry of Culture referred me to herbalists (whose practice I address more fully in Chapter 6) who were clear that they had no interest in witchcraft; it is possible that the separation of herbalism from more overtly occult practices was the product of global heritage discourses, and state management of appropriately cultural practices. Traditional medicine is incorporated by the Ministry of Culture into a ‘cultural heritage’ that attracts

tourists to the islands. Evidently, *grigri* is not presently considered to be useful in the same way, either due to concern that tourists will not find it attractive or because there is general resistance among locals to deploying it in this manner. However, this has not always been the case. In the mid-20th century, the idea of Seychelles as a place of dark, dangerous ‘love magic’ was sufficiently attractive to tourists that the Benedicts were aware of this narrative prior to their arrival (1982:10), and this old narrative occasionally resurfaces in modern travel writing (Emerson 2010).

But the Ministry did introduce me to an herbalist who also identified as a witchcraft practitioner: a middle-aged man named Jean-Joseph Madeleine, who not only produces medicines and consults patients, but also writes horror novels (published by Lenstiti Kreol). Though it was difficult to establish when Madeleine was performing the role of the potentially dangerous witch-doctor for the benefit of my foreign gaze, and when he was merely being frank about his life as he saw it, his portrayal of the occult was consistent with the ways that other interlocutors understood it.

Two women, Yvette and Marie-Claire, organised a meeting and accompanied me as research assistants; they were very familiar with Madeleine and had worked with him at various cultural events, including traditional medicine workshops and book launches. We sat on the veranda of a small building adjacent to his home. Initially Madeleine identified himself as a “spiritualist” and “Cabalist.” He was aware that there were many rumours about him and the nature of his work, but was open and willing to talk about this as he did not feel he had anything to hide. “They say that I am a witch,” he said. “Well – I *am* a witch.” But he was not a “bad witch” and certainly not a *lougarou*,²⁹ as he was rumoured to be – it was not true that his wife had once returned home to find him drinking blood from a

²⁹ From the French *loup-garoux* - a monster that combines elements of European werewolf and vampire mythologies.

huge pot, and fled. “Look,” he said, gesturing towards the main house, where his wife sat with a group of children on the veranda. “She is still here!”

It was rumoured that he had sacrificed the life of his young daughter to gain his power. In fact, Madeleine said, she had died in a car accident, prompting him to turn to the occult in his grief. He “wanted to do bad,” and travelled to Africa in order to learn from a teacher there. The teacher passed on his knowledge and presented Madeleine with the choice of embracing either black magic, or good magic that would benefit the community, and at the last moment Madeleine let go of his grief and decided to be good.

While he worked with herbal medicine, the other side of his craft involved accessing an intangible, non-corporeal realm, and contact with a particular spirit. He referred to this nonhuman being as a “guardian angel” or “djinn”, and his home contained a special antechamber where he communed with it every morning. The room was accessible via a door in his office, through another intermediate room with a pew that faced the window and a shelf of Catholic prayer books and Cabalist texts. While the office had been dark and filled with books, photographs, and memorabilia from his time in the army, the rooms dedicated to his spiritual life were flooded with sunlight that reflected off the whitewashed walls. After we had talked for more than an hour, he asked if I would like to speak to the djinn. When I agreed, he asked me, Yvette and Marie-Claire to remove our shoes, watches, and jewellery. Mobile phones were also forbidden. We passed through the door, past the pew, through another door into the smallest room, and there Yvette and I sat on a low bench, while Marie-Claire stood. This room was bright, but the light was filtered through a blue and red cloth that covered the window. There was a small altar directly in front of me, with a carved African mask on it, and a bowl that contained the remains of a chicken. Madeleine lit a small piece of incense and blew on it until it

smouldered, and then showed me a little book-like object made from bound pieces of leather. This book, he told us, indicated that the djinn was present. When the air was warm enough to move its pages, the djinn was with us.

He closed his eyes, and we waited. When the pages of the book began to move, he murmured softly in Kreol. Addressing us, he said that the djinn wanted to know if we had any wishes. Since he asked me first, I said that I wished my research would go well; after communing silently with the spirit, he said me that it would. Yvette and Marie-Claire both asked for the well-being of their families, which Madeleine said was assured.

When the session with the djinn was concluded, he showed us a book that listed guardian angels corresponding to each star sign, and offered them to us to read. My two companions read theirs aloud but, unsure of my French, I read mine silently. Madeleine was concerned that I had not read it, though I assured him I had; he laughed, and said, as though he respected my shrewdness, “You keep it to yourself.”

On the walk back, I asked Yvette what she made of the meeting. Laughing, she reflected that Madeleine was a character – but his horror novels were terrifying! Marie-Claire remained silent, frowning slightly, and I sensed that she disapproved of our making light of these things.

The next day, we were scheduled to visit John Etienne at his vast wooden house in the hills. I took the bus with Yvette, and we discussed the day before. I mused that Madeleine had been quite clear to differentiate his magic from black magic, prompting laughter from Yvette. I had assumed that she was not superstitious, from her apparent indifference to the encounter with the *djinn*; I realised that I was mistaken.

“But what people say about him is *true!*” she said. “He drinks *blood!* I used to live there, nearby. When my father asked me to go to the well to get water at night, I was so frightened!”

During the interview with Etienne, the conversation turned to magic. He did not do magic, he said, but he believed in the healing power of local plants. His brother was someone who had “many spirits inside him”, with which he healed people. Marie-Claire asked how one should deal with occult ill-will from someone else.

Etienne sighed. “I am telling you,” he said seriously, “that the best thing you can do for yourself is not to think about that person, not to pay any attention.”

This seemed to me to be sensible advice. But it was just this – not paying any attention – that was the hardest thing of all.

*

Several important dimensions of *grigri* are present in this narrative. While it has a relationship with *kankan*, I will argue that this is important only insofar as *grigri* is similar to other African forms of witchcraft. This is evident through its emphasis on kin and consumption (natural and unnatural), as well as through its modernity and capacity for absorption.

The Benedicts, like Evans Pritchard (1937:46), linked witchcraft and gossip, treating *grigri* as the instrumentalisation of *kankan* via herbal medicinal knowledge (1982:96). Marion Benedict argued that the *bonnonm dibwa* was a kind of node in gossip networks, mediating disputes between kin and neighbours via obscure propitiatory rites and dispensing dubious potions (ibid. 98). This fits within the older tradition of Seychelles as a dark and sensuous place full of love-magic, and is to some extent borne out by Madeleine’s

positioning in the community – since, after all, he was able to create his own mythology through writing horror novels, in a way that enhanced his authority with regard to the occult. However, treating *grigri* simply as *kankan* in disguise cannot locate either phenomenon in a larger African occult context, nor does it really account for the way that harm (of both occult and mundane varieties) was understood by Seychellois interlocutors.

Though elements of *grigri* indicate European contributions to the practice (fortune telling with cards remains a common occult practice) (Benedict and Benedict 1982:144), it was characterised by my interlocutors as primarily African. Madeleine's knowledge was acquired through an East African teacher. The transmission of African occult knowledge is evident in historical accounts that describe the use of miraculous herbal cures among enslaved people in the islands (Taylor 2005:427). But this association with Africa is ambivalent, and a distance between Seychelles and Africa is preserved here as in other areas (see Chapter 1). Charles Zialor, a famous *bonnonm dibwa* of the early 20th century, was said to have received a book from King Prempeh of the Ashanti (now conveniently lost) that contained magic too "strong" for him to use it (ibid. 429). Characterising *grigri* as such was perhaps not only a reflection of historical fact, but a way of articulating its danger. This attitude that was particularly obvious in the popular imaginary of Madagascar as an especially witch-ridden place. Members of my own family in the diaspora had commented on this while I was growing up, and I was surprised to find that these attitudes were still current, expressed as suspicion of Malagasy immigrants (especially women, who would naturally want to cast love-spells on Seychellois men). Helda Marie, a poet, mentioned during an interview that her father was from Madagascar and that because of this some Seychellois assumed he had magic powers. When I asked if that was because Malagasy people were considered more African than Seychellois, she uttered a firm yes.

However, situating *grigri* analytically within a broader context of African occult traditions accounts for the way that it articulates the nature of intimate harm. It was a commonly-held belief among interlocutors that power was attained through the sacrifice of a family member, usually a child. The person thus sacrificed was said to act as a spiritual go-between for the witch (*Today in Seychelles* 2014); one interlocutor explained that communication between living and dead had to take place on the Sunday night of the week that the person was murdered, in the cemetery. In other African contexts, witchcraft has been understood as a substance, organ or creature within the witch's body (Geschiere 2013:4) and is sometimes heritable (Evans-Pritchard 1937:2). Malign occult action may establish a correspondence between the body of the witch and that of the witch's victim (Bongmba 2001:51-2). This correspondence is most evident in the idea that witches consume intimate others, and that witchcraft is a kind of metaphorical cannibalism (Apter 2008:249; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:289).

The centrality of unnatural consumption is apparent in Madeleine's story, as well as other accounts. In Madeleine's case, his alleged appetite for blood was an important part of his mystique. Another interlocutor told me that once when the farmers in the area surrounding Madeleine's house had slaughtered their cattle, they had found them to be completely drained of blood, because "his thing" (the djinn) had drunk it in the night. Other, less gruesome, narratives often focused on food as a possible vehicle for ill intent and unnatural control of others. The love potions in old stories were mixed into food and drink. Halfway through my fieldwork, it was reported on the national news that a woman had been murdered by her young daughter. While the woman had died from repeated stab wounds, newspapers and TV shows reported that the daughter had made a first attempt on her life by feeding her a poisoned carbonara (Athanase 2016), and there was media speculation that the crime was occult in nature.

Eating food prepared by another was a fraught experience even where a connection to *malfezans* was not explicitly articulated. My mother, in her youth, had been told to avoid food cooked by one branch of the extended family because it was “dirty”; while I found that turning down even third helpings could offend or dismay a host. This was partly related to the norms of cleanliness and politeness outlined in Chapter 3. But in some cases, refusing food was a comment on the intentions of the person who had cooked it, and a few of my own experiences were sufficiently odd that I wondered if they fell into this category. On one occasion, I had travelled with Tupperware filled with chicken and rice from the home of one group of relatives, only to watch dumbfounded as it was hastily and joylessly consumed by another group of relatives before I could eat a morsel. On another occasion, after a conflict between adults, the children of the family refused food cooked by the grown-ups and eyed it with teary suspicion. Whether or not these incidents had anything to do with witchcraft, they turned on the openness and vulnerability of the body (Mbembe 1992:12), on mouth and belly as sites of power (ibid. 28) and points of entry. It is also significant that the possibility was implied, rather than spoken aloud.

Through such ambivalence, *grigri* has proved resistant to attempts to eradicate witchcraft beliefs in Seychelles (Taylor 2005:432), and coexists alongside other magical commodities and services (digital and analogue) within global “occult economies” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2018:290). African witchcraft more generally has undergone a transformation in this respect, becoming articulated as global (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:282) – urban, impersonal, and detached from the context of the village and kin (Ndjio 2008:286). But in Seychelles, the commodified aspect of *grigri* has historically been apparent through its association with commodities: food, playing cards, coins and books. This reflects the co-constitution of population and plantation, as the latter not only intervened in kin and ethnicity, but commodified them.

However, books have a special importance in relation to *grigri*. The word itself is said to be derived from *grimoire* (book) (Ozanne 1936:107). Marion Benedict's informants asked for her help in procuring a book on the "black market"³⁰ containing powerful spells (1982:89), and Benedict linked this to a generalised attitude toward literacy amongst Seychellois. She described one woman who had her child memorise flight information from the Air France catalogue, in the hope that he would one day work for the airline (ibid. 61). For Benedict, this reflected an ignorance, not only of literacy and its uses, but of the workings of modernity, and it is worth quoting her appraisal of her interlocutor at length:

The importance of the book was also, to her, the whole point of education. You read books and you get power; that is how she saw education. She seemed not to distinguish among books and certainly did not think it useful to question their authority. Controversial thoughts, if you must have them, are best left unspoken: saying what you think gets you into trouble. Books are to be imbibed like a magic potion: they give you the power to pass exams and to become a government official, headmistress, doctor, or even a priest (ibid. 100).

In witchcraft the *form* of the book has an importance almost independent of its contents, as Benedict suspected from her interlocutors' attention to its size and colour (ibid. 89). In Madeleine's case, though he had collected various Cabalist texts that were important to his practice, communication with the djinn was facilitated through a leather 'book' without content. I would argue instead that an attitude towards books as repositories of power is entirely consistent with Seychellois ideas of materiality and, beyond this, the nature of textual knowledge.

Through the reading habits of interlocutors and relatives, I was party to aspects of everyday engagement with books and other textual materials. Reading, like other parts of social life, was permeated by politics through the abundance of local papers that addressed both sides of the divide. Newer online sources like Seychelles News Agency were also

³⁰ Benedict was explicit about the fact that the blackness alluded to here was racialized, amongst its other connotations (ibid.).

instrumental in constituting the political public, as were Facebook groups. In Seychelles, as in other parts of the Indian Ocean (Hofmeyr, et al. 2011) and the wider world (Anderson 2006:34-5), reading, writing and printing have played a large role in constituting both nation and national self-image.

But texts also mingle the public and declarative with the private. In the past, prayer cards were pasted on the interior walls of houses (like those described in Chapter 3), becoming eroded and unreadable over time, but still valued for their protection against *malfezans*. They are still popular with the older generation of Seychellois in the islands. Increasingly, incantatory internet memes and chain letters are circulated between family members transnationally; like the prayer cards, they express wishes for good health and longevity, and like the prayer cards they become degraded by the process of use and circulation.³¹ In contrast to Benedict's interlocutors, who had a relatively low level of literacy, my interlocutors were voracious readers and, via Facebook, blogs, and more official channels, often keen writers too. Uncle Terence described the way that "the boat" would arrive every few months with new reading material, and Seychellois would descend on it to pick it clean. The bookshops in Victoria had a constant turnover of stock. Desirable reading material included airport spy novels, romances (including the racier sort, like *Fifty Shades of Gray*), and self-help texts. Interlocutors read *The Secret* and implemented "the Law of Attraction" by focusing intentionally on their own desires, in order to manifest them in the world; they read pop psychology, Christian relationship advice, New Age 'spell books', Cabalist compendia of angels, and fiction that drew on occult lore. An old tradition of Freemasonry in the islands intersected with belief in New World Order conspiracies. For one of my interlocutors, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, made it clear that the world was

³¹ Repeated compression of jpeg files leads to the phenomenon of the "shitpic" (Feldman 2014), a noisy image full of digital artefacts that function as signs of the ways that the image has circulated.

full of decipherable signs, and communicated not only secret histories but possibilities for future wealth (Comaroff and Comaroff 2018:300).

The distinction between an economy of everyday reading material, and an “occult economy” of arcane knowledge, was not readily discernible. Important to this blurring was the way that private reading and reflection centred individual intent – a proposition that was at once desirable and dangerous. Speaking to instructors at the Yoga Association of Seychelles, I learned that they frequently encountered the belief that yoga, and specifically meditation, was Satanic. One teacher explained that he tried to emphasis fitness benefits and to avoid the use of mantras or anything that appeared spell-like, but that it was meditation itself – understood as the act of focusing on one’s own thought processes – that was suspect.

In speaking of men’s peripherality in Chapter 3, I touched on the idea of individualism and its place in relation to the home. Before moving on to the next section, I wish to suggest that masculine dirtiness and individuality was not figured as problematic insofar as it was not the main mode of household life. What made books (and other objects) dangerous in the context of *grigri* and *kankan* was not only the way that they might represent individualised intent but the fact that they did not represent it straightforwardly – instead, they left room for misreadings, reinterpretation, and innuendo. This was particularly dangerous when objects had long afterlives.



Figure 27. Horseshoe and playing card on the door of an old house, Mont Buxton. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Afterlives

If removing things (from the home, from history, from the nation) was fraught, there was a related problem: things that did not disappear and could not be removed. While I have thus far argued that *grigri* was dangerous both through its textuality and its foregrounding of individual intent, in this section I will argue that intent is especially dangerous wherever it has an afterlife. Books and texts preserved the past, as did historical sites and heritage artefacts. Retaining and preserving material evidence of the past, while fundamental to state and non-state interactions with it, ran afoul of the tendency of material things to go awry, and to reveal hidden histories.

During fieldwork I encountered books not only as objects, but as “sticky” ones (Ahmed 2010:44), to which intent adhered. To the extent that they were associated with both home and nation, they were also “unhappy” objects (ibid.) that preserved intent and extended its life, and could grant authority to some versions of events over others. Interlocutors within culture and heritage were troubled by the use of archival materials by foreign researchers, aware that this could contribute to an image of *kreolite*, the nation and its history that was not respectable. The desire to conceal such histories stemmed from not only how they might be read, but how they might be *misread* – as visual artist, poet and culture worker Peter Pierre-Louis articulated it, in the past researchers had utilised the archive to write “a lot of nonsense” about Seychellois. Anthropological knowledge does not evade the problem of misreading, which not only poses questions of the power imbalances inherent in producing ethnographic representations (Clifford and Marcus 1986), but, in Seychelles, has consequences for intimate relationships. My own fieldwork diary and notes were always potentially harmful objects as far as my family and the people around me were concerned. My reassurances to them addressed how I would use the information I recorded – and thus its afterlife – but it was more difficult to address the history of surveillance within among intimates, which had its own afterlife in familial conflict and distrust, as well as the fact that I felt it necessary to record my own version of events in the first place.

But books were not the only objects whose stickiness could become problematic in relation to the past. A similar tangle of the political, the intimate and the occult existed around particular landscapes, objects and sites, which were haunted by *nanm* (ghosts, from

the French '*une âme*', soul) and other kinds of supernatural being.³² Through interlocutors' accounts of interactions with the dead, I understood that while disappearances were frightening, so too was the persistence of past intent.

Stories of encounters with ghosts were commonplace, and haunting was a frequent topic of conversation among members of my family, interviewees, friends and women attending the yoga class I sometimes attended. Ghosts roamed roads and highways in the dead of night, frequently patrolling the road leading past Mont Fleuri Cemetery – the main burial ground on Mahé, bustling with ghostly traffic – and called out to the living. Normal rules of politeness did not apply in such situations; friends and relatives told me that if I was walking alone on a road or highway at night, and I heard someone calling my name, I should not turn around or even acknowledge the sound. In fact, Rayna and Mervyn told me, the most effective way to get rid of a ghost was to swear loudly and in the most inventive and obscene terms one knew. Mervyn himself had direct experience of this scenario – he had been walking with his cousin in the early morning, when he heard someone calling his cousin's name. In defiance of common wisdom, he turned to look, and saw a woman in "old-fashioned green running shorts" about to enfold his cousin in her embrace, but he managed to frighten her away with a barrage of rude words. "I saved his life," he said, though neither he nor anyone else could tell me exactly what happened when a ghost succeeded in 'getting' somebody.

These accounts were often vague in conventional ways: interlocutors substituted the words "something" or "thing" (*keksoz*) for the term *nanm*, and stressed their uncertainty about whether they were recalling the experience correctly, as well scepticism

³² While many of my interlocutors became coy in the face of my questions about the difference between ghosts and spirits, I did establish that not only were these distinct, but that there were also Seychellois zombies (*dondosya*).

as to the existence of ghosts altogether. Unlike religious faith, the presence or absence of ghosts was not dependent on belief but was a question of encountering evidence, and this evidence – of pasts both clearly remembered and half-recalled – was produced for analysis during evening conversations, on verandas and in cars.

Rayna told me that she had, as a child, woken in the middle of the night to find “something” caressing her bare feet; her mother had assured her that it was “passing through” and would not stay. She had a vivid memory of another occasion, when she and her siblings had hidden underneath the dining table, afraid of “something” (she described it as larger than an animal) that was running across the corrugated roof. Her grandmother had warmed a stone in the brazier, wrapped it in a sling of cloth, gone out into the night and flung the stone at the thing on the roof, all the while swearing at it in the worst words she could summon.³³ Both these experiences she questioned even as she was recounting them, wondering aloud whether one could have a clear memory of something that had never happened at all.

Rose, a woman in her forties who was born in Europe and raised in Seychelles, was mildly dismissive when I raised the topic with her. She said, “What is a ghost? When you die, you are no longer here. It’s ridiculous to say that you stay here.” Eventually, she relented and allowed that “sometimes an – *impression* can be left behind.”

Such impressions had been left on the small Inner Island of Silhouette, where the former *grann kaz* built by the Dauban family had been converted into a hotel (and subsequently into a private resort). Rose had worked at the old hotel, where tourists sometimes enquired about the baby they had heard crying during the night, only to be told

³³ Features of this story suggest that the presence on the roof may have been a witch (Malbrook and Bonnelame 2017).

that there was no baby among the guests. A spectral white lady was sometimes seen crossing the lawn. Once Rose woke in the dark to hear a strange voice calling her name, over and over; another time, as she stood beneath a full moon looking at the lawn on a bright, clear night, she was seized by a sudden terror. A clear voice in her mind told her to return to the house, and she obeyed.

Through ghosts, the point at which the “homely” becomes the “uncanny” is visible (Freud 1955 (1909)-b; Geschiere 2013:27), as ghosts persist through an excess of human intention – a failure to clean, a failure to disappear. I have already touched on the fact that the possessions of a deceased person were supposed to be removed from the house in a timely fashion. Here I will suggest that this is not solely about mitigating the pain of remembering a loved one, but mirrors beliefs among other Indian Ocean Afro-Creole populations that if the deceased is not properly directed toward the afterlife, it will attempt to return to where it used to live (Johannessen 2011:209). Johannessen’s Chagossian interlocutors were clear that cleaning the house was a way of preventing hauntings of this kind (ibid.), as it was understood that ghosts would naturally want to return to the place that they had lived. Wandering ghosts of the sort described to me were seeking, if not their own home, any home. I understand this as connected to the principle underlying the significance of trees (Chapter 1), the health-giving properties of wooden houses (Chapter 3), and the use of herbal medicine (to be discussed in Chapter 6): a general tendency of material things towards regeneration.

In this context, the emphasis that heritage places upon preserving what would otherwise disappear creates the conditions for haunting. The preservation of the *grann kaz* as heritage meant that these monumental structures continued to be full of furniture and the ephemera of daily life during the era of slavery (even restored, augmented, recreated).

They were haunted by the owners of these belongings, members of the *grann blan* class who had enjoyed material luxury in life. Ange Pillieron still walked the corridors of La Bastille, the house he had built in the 1930s (Mathiot 2016). One of the upstairs rooms of Lenstiti Kreol (formerly the home of the Jorre de St Jorre family) is home to a ghostly inhabitant. Because such buildings often housed divisions of the Ministry of Culture, or were considered monuments in the context of tangible cultural heritage, these ghosts were involved in an ongoing intimacy with the living and with the state. Through the tourist industry, in particular, they retained kinds of *grann blan* power – they were identifiable as specific people, their lives were understood as valuable, and they were attractive figures to visitors.

But there were also ghosts associated with what might be understood, in the context of the plantation past, as “negative” heritage (Geismar 2015:81) – the past defined, not merely by intangibility or ephemerality but by an absence of material culture. The dense hillside forests, where maroons had fled and *mocambos* had been established, were haunted. During Rayna’s childhood, her grandmother had taken her to forage in the dense woods on the hillside, but they had sometimes been interrupted by the sound of heavy footfalls nearby. Rayna described the sound of these footsteps in a way that implied the dragging of chains. Her grandmother would say lightly, “There is someone else here. Let’s move on.”

What is perplexing about preservation is not that its consequences are automatically harmful or dangerous – after all, as I have said, my own interlocutors found encounters with ghosts both exciting and banal. Rather, I am interested in the idea of heritage as a form of regeneration that tends towards excess and dirtiness – both qualities associated with the state in the postcolony (Mbembe 1992:7). One final example illustrates

the material presence of competing narratives and layers of secrecy: the National Archives, which were frequently closed for cleaning.

The building in which the archives were housed – the National Cultural Centre – was beset with problems that I would hesitate to impute solely to the complexities of knowledge production, but which meant that access to the materials had to be limited. The original site of the National Archives at La Bastille had been plagued by appearances by its deceased owner; the new site at the NCC had to be closed frequently due to issues with mould that stemmed from the age of the books.³⁴ While different methods of cleaning were attempted, these were considered potentially more dangerous than the mould itself (Durup 2014). The problem of these old and dirty things became intertwined with the political – the archives, as a state institution, shared space at the NCC with government offices and the Electoral Commission. The NCC was the focus of weekly protests by LDS activists, and during the conceptual art workshop discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it was these activists who proclaimed loudly that the installation *SX3* was an act of *malfezans* designed to enslave and silence them. The vulnerabilities of the nation-state were part of the porousness of a building which, in a multiparty democracy, had to accommodate both state *kreolite* and its critiques.

Family secrets

Here I will draw on material from Chapter 3, as well as this chapter, to consider why the house should be the site of such intense effort to manage appearances, and why

³⁴ This simplifies some of the confusion present in narratives about the two sites, as mould had been present at La Bastille, and I was never clear to what extent it was present at the NCC – only that closures were explained with reference to this. What is undeniable is that the mould was a kind of scandal, and that workers who had been exposed to it had shown symptoms indicative “sick building syndrome” in other parts of the world: rashes, respiratory difficulties, and hair loss.

disappearances should be part of this. While I have referred to the realities of household consumption, the slave past, the occult, and the recent political past as secrets, I have also described ways that they are clearly in evidence. They are what Michael Taussig has designated “public” secrets – “that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated” (Taussig 1999:5); they are also, importantly, family secrets. The Creole family, which is valorised through state *kreolite*, could also facilitate harm, both through what was present within the family and what was perceived to be missing from it.

In *Passages*, I gave an overview of the ways that intimacy could be linked to harm. If there is an anthropological imperative to problematize the positive charge of the term through considering its historical production (Geschiere 2013:32), it is significant that for my interlocutors, intimacy not only created opportunities for the betrayal of trust, but also for physical and sexual abuse, as well as relationships that were simply improper. The occult is not the only dark side of kinship. Philip, an artist, told me, “[The press] want to talk about corruption [in politics], but corruption begins in the family.” He understood corruption as a potential for favouritism that had expanded beyond appropriate bounds. This possibility, which might be considered a feature of families everywhere, was for some Seychellois understood to be uniquely Creole and therefore shameful.

Anthony, a culture worker, told me, “I never married, thank God. You can be sleeping next to somebody for twenty, thirty years and that person can be your worst enemy.” Months later, he discussed his own family situation in more depth – the sibling rivalries, and the way that these impacted upon his mother. His tone was graver and his manner weary. He said, “You know, we talk about Creole values and reviving the Creole way of life. The truth is, it’s all shit. People are horrible. Don’t worry that your family are bad people. My family are bad people too.”

The idea that families and intimate relationships are the basis for corruption at the level of the nation-state, or that Creole people are in some way “bad people”, is not simply a comment on the nature of intimacy generally, but a product of the histories outlined throughout this thesis. The “total economic institution” of the plantation (Beckford 1972:55), the political shifts of the 20th century, and the present-day economic importance of tourism have all contributed to the negative dimensions of national self-image, as well as the positive ones.

The idea of “matrifocality” (Chapter 3) in post-plantation societies, and the debate about the extent to which it has been produced by slavery, illustrates these tensions. In outlining the impact of the plantation, it is hard to avoid slippage between the form of the family and the kinds of violence that existed in relation to it – a consequence of the tacit understanding that the literature of “matrifocality” was often about the extent to which black families could be considered dysfunctional. Nor is this a “dead issue” (Blackwood 2005:3) for Seychellois; state *kreolite* means that it has significance globally and locally.

The extractive nature of the plantation did have an impact on how families were structured. It rendered men spatially peripheral to the house through the forms of labour demanded of them, and intervened legally and materially in relationships between mothers and children (Spillers 1987:75). Female networks in post-plantation societies developed in the context of property relations that precluded marriage between individuals figured as chattels (Smith 1962:261), and which engendered forms of racism and structural violence that required ingenuity (Stack 1974:120). The plantation also naturalised intimate violence via its economic logic. Rape was commonplace because the dehumanisation of enslaved men and women was a governing principle of plantation societies (Spillers 1987:68), and this sexual violence is one of the sources of *métissage*. The idea of black fathers as absent

constructed white masculinity, through violence, as paternal (Vergès 1999:40)³⁵. The emphasis placed on “respectability” as a value governing sexuality must be understood in the context of shame surrounding sexual abuse as a method of control in the plantation. In Seychelles, the plantation had consequences for understandings of race (Chapter 1), land use and habitation patterns (Chapter 2), and the construction of gender norms (Chapter 3), all of which overlapped in the context of the family. It is clear that the plantation has an afterlife, and that this is visible in aspects of intimate life.

However, investigations of kinship have long been as revealing of academic preoccupations as emic ones (Povinelli 2002:224-6; Schneider 1980:118-9). Feminist anthropologists recognised that the academic understanding of matrilocality was premised on the tacit assumption that women were inferior, and the centrality of mothers within households unnatural (Tanner 1974:130). As such, they displayed a fixation on what Blackwood has termed the “missing man” (Blackwood 2005:8). Raymond T. Smith, in writing extensively about the concept within Caribbean kinship, was clear that matrilocality was not dependent on female-headed households or “marital instability,” and did not demand that men be considered peripheral (Smith 1996:42); rather, it could be present by degree in a variety of family structures across cultural contexts (Smith 1996:54).

The literature of matrilocality was also disproportionately focused on black (and especially black American) households (Tanner 1974:134). Most influentially, Moynihan described female-headed households as “family disorganization” (1965:9), part of the “deterioration of the Negro family” that would prevent black Americans from attaining equal civil rights (ibid. 6). While the Moynihan report has drawn criticism since its publication (Spillers 1987:66), its vocabulary is still present in public discourses surrounding

³⁵ It is worth noting that white women, too, were capable of enacting violence within the plantation (Spillers 1987:76-7). What I emphasise here is the constitutive role this played in white masculinity.

black families in the US. In particular, the idea of the relationship between black mothers and (implicitly male) children has frequently been treated with suspicion (Collins 2005:149; Spillers 1987:66). Attempts to locate such family structures in the property relation entailed by slavery (Smith 1962:260) reinforce this sense of female-headed households as existing outside a norm of nuclear family organization. Attempts to revalue mother-centred households as survivals from an era prior to slavery, in making the question historical, do not escape the obsessive focus on the absence of a properly “Patriarchal Man” (Blackwood 2005:9) – an imagined absence, that is really a way of devaluing the presence of black fathers, grandfathers, brothers and uncles.

The Benedicts reproduced some of these assumptions in their discussion of Seychellois families (unsurprisingly, given that they wrote and researched at a time when matrilocality was actively being debated). They concluded that mother-focused households were not a remnant of African kinship practices, but a dysfunctional product of the violence of colonialism, inevitably resulting in “dependency” as a personal and national characteristic (1982:104-5). In particular, they considered that a capacity for dependency was reproduced through the physical proximity to mothers of children – especially sons, suggesting that these relationships had an intrinsic impropriety and even “a flirtatious quality” (ibid. 210). In making these observations, they replicated a logic applied to other black diasporic populations. Matrilocality was similarly linked to dependency, via the mother-son relationship, by the French colonial government in La Réunion (Vergès 1999:238). The framework of matrilocality, where it has been applied to black mothers, was a way of retrenching the importance of the influence of a white father and a paternal colonising power (ibid. 40). Within the context of chattel slavery, this logic operated on the basis that African and Afro-diasporic families were not families at all, for “if “kinship” were possible, the property relations would be undermined, since the offspring would then

"belong" to a mother and a father" (Spillers 1987:75). As such, it underlines the extent to which white fatherhood has been conceptualised as the right to hold property (see Chapter 2, on the conflation of whiteness with ownership).

Patriarchal authority, rather than black fathers, was the phantasm. The idea of genteel femininity confined within the house (see Chapter 3) is thus part of a fantasy of private life (Berlant 1998:283) that extends beyond the behaviour of women – though I want to be clear that this was the fantasy of observers rather than Seychellois alone. The development of such fantasies society-wide ideals of emotion and attachment has consequences for national self-stereotypes, both in terms of how they are articulated and how they are experienced.

Interlocutors were not careless in their parenting; closeness between adults and children was natural and even a highly-valued part of being Creole, but it was constantly managed and monitored. Women often drew special strength from their relationships with sons even if they expressed guilt for doting on them. Anxiety about the possibility of violence within loving relationships arose particular in relation to men and their presence in the house.³⁶ Relationships between fathers and children, as well as uncles and other adult male relatives, were underpinned by anxiety about the possibility of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) that was always linked to antisocial behaviours – drinking to excess, and other kinds of substance abuse – stereotyped as especially male. The state's focus on motherhood was mirrored by the fact that women, at an individual level, were deeply concerned with how to be good mothers emotionally, while also providing financially.

³⁶ A possible violence compounded, rather than ameliorated, by the influence of white masculinity – I am thinking here of Ozanne's speculation that Seychellois girls were cavalier about entering into prostitution because, in many cases, "the girl's first lover had been her father" (1936:140), a superficially sympathetic statement that is nonetheless a callous one.

Insofar as men were absent or peripheral, it was due to these factors, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

Additionally, these anxieties about men perhaps related to fears of the family as too close. The ideal house had to remain at least somewhat permeable. Aside from ghost stories, another popular kind of narrative amongst those I knew in the field were stories of unwitting incest, often between cousins of the same generation (but sometimes between brother and sister), I understood this to be about a more general worry about the fluidity of the household in a small island context in which extramarital affairs and secret unions occurred. If fear of incest is partly rooted in the European imaginary of islands as lawless and isolated (Hunt 2013:29), it also draws on the diasporic fear of the experience of slavery as a loss of historical memory that destroyed intimate ties (Besson 1995:189). During my stay, a short (fictional) film on this subject was screened as part of a festival of local Creole movies; it depicted a woman who was unable to prevent her son from falling in love with a girl who was actually his sister. Such stories could be distressing, framed as melodrama, or could be the basis for joking; in either case, the reversal of the logic of filiation was conceptualised as disturbing (Glissant 1997). From older female interlocutors, I understood that relationships between cousins had been less stigmatised during the early 20th century, in Seychelles as in other parts of the world, so that perhaps these were anxieties about the extent to which the Creole family was a repository of old-fashioned attitudes. But I think, too, that it speaks to anxiety about the scale of the family: fear that the population was too small, the house too big.

This chapter contends that the ideal house is only clean insofar as it is subject to the regular removal of dirty things, and this has historically been true of both real houses and ideas of the nation. At the level of real houses, this process was stressful and revealing

of the dark side of intimacy, in the form of gossip and possible occult harm. Personal intent became more problematic in this way, taking on an afterlife, and rendering objects unhappy by attaching pasts to them. Underlying this was a suspicion of the intimacy at the heart of the Creole family. The next chapter takes up this idea of insularity as problematic, and further expands on the idea of men as peripheral, to consider the ways that spaces and practices outside the house are valued through state *kreolite*.

Part III

Chapter 5: Exile: Youth and Going Astray

My dream for Seychelles was a place of smiles and laughter with, under each coconut tree, a young man with a guitar. That dream had turned into a nightmare. The young men were under the trees all right, but with Russian-made machine-guns instead of guitars.

(Mancham 1983:13)

Kastor, zenn Afriken, for, ti prefere revolte kont sa sistenm sal, enzis, e i ti tras semen laliberte antraver lafore.

Castor, a young African, strong, who prefers to revolt against a dirty, unjust system, and trace a path of freedom athwart the forest.

(Victor 2007:24)

If men were rendered peripheral in relation to the ideal house, I have suggested that this marginality could also be valorised through modes of individualistic masculine behaviour that were treated as quintessentially Creole. This chapter will consider what the “outside” has typically meant in Seychelles, both historically and in the present day, and how it is simultaneously treated as dangerous and yet valuable to *kreolite*. While the behaviour of young and marginal men is characterised as the product of ‘social ills,’ in the period surrounding the Independence and the *koudeta* this distance from the house was reconfigured as closeness to the nation.

The schema of the “traditional house” associates the outside with masculinity, and it is men who are the primary focus of this chapter – though it is also significant that the social construction of exteriority does not preclude the possibility of women’s participation.

I describe a series of archetypal male positions in relation to the home and interrogate them in relation to the history of masculinity in Seychelles. Young men, and older men who were estranged from the house, were considered easily politicised, a remnant of the mid-20th century political context. In the 1980s, as daily life was becoming increasingly militarised, the National Youth Service had been set up in order to socialise young people into a revolutionary, African engagement with being Creole. Male interlocutors thrived in this environment, which drew on an older association between wild places and revolutionary men, epitomised by the maroons (runaway slaves), with whom some male artists strongly identified. The image of the maroon was not just politicised, but fit within a romantic tradition of spatial exclusion as exile, which allowed for the possibility of return. In this respect, the real point of contrast with masculine peripherality is not the “inside” of the house, but the wider world of the diaspora.

Ti Men

This section begins from the kind of exteriority to the house embodied by ‘*ti men*’ (literally ‘little men,’ youths), who were treated as a problem within state *kreolite* and particularly in the context of education. As young, modern participants in a global diasporic blackness that ran counter to older ideas of respectability, they were frequently figured as lacking respect for authority. I argue, based on the accounts of interlocutors, that these young men were kept “outside” not only by the respectability of the Creole home, but by older men.

State *kreolite* was bound up with the idea of youth as a problem. The idea of a *renesans* (renaissance) of Creole values was proposed, not simply as a good in itself, but as a response to a growth in “social ills” that accompanied “development.” Chapter 3

connected this to criticism of female-headed households, and Chapter 4, discussing “matrifocality” in further depth, posited that this criticism was implicitly focused on the relationship between mothers and sons. Young men, then, were treated as participants in and products of modern “social ills.” Importantly, this treatment constructed youth and waywardness as implicitly masculine (Spillers 1987:66).³⁷

The freshly-attired groups of *ti men* whiling away each afternoon in the shade were not, despite the fact that older Seychellois often grumbled about them, behaving in a way that was considered intrinsically anti-social. Young men gathering on the street to joke and drink is a phenomenon that exists cross-culturally, but in Seychelles the similarities with Caribbean “liming” culture are apparent (cf. Miller 1994:33-4). The forerunners of *ti men* were those early-20th century ‘loafers’ described by Ozanne as sitting beneath the sandragon trees³⁸ in Victoria, calling out to any European woman misguided enough to wear ‘bathing pyjamas’ away from the beach (1936:152). These kinds of gatherings have historically been part of men’s sociality in Seychelles (Benedict and Benedict 1982). What marked the young men as a potential danger to society was the way they presented themselves, and a notion of what they might have been doing instead.

During fieldwork in Seychelles, I often encountered groups of young men sitting beneath mango trees and palms in the park, or by the side of the road. These young men wore versions of the clothes popularised by labels such as Hood by Air and BOY London, though produced by cheaper Chinese labels and sold in the ‘Filipino’ shops in the town centre. The standard outfit was: matching baseball cap, t-shirt (with a neoclassical motif or

³⁷ Many of the NGOs and parastatals that engaged with the ‘problem’ of youth were staffed by women under the age of 30; youth ambassadorship overlapped considerably with the charitable economy in which beauty queens also played a pivotal role.

³⁸ An association between young men and trees is durable for reasons that are perhaps pragmatic and not poetic – trees provide shade.

dark floral print), shorts (matching) or tailored tracksuit trousers in pleather or faux-ostrich skin, and ersatz 'Nike' slides. In bright reds and blues, crisp white or stark black, the clothes always appeared new, freshly-laundered and ironed. The youths were, unsurprisingly, absorbed in their own jokes and conversations; on my road, if I passed them, they might stop long enough for one boy to utter a sarcastic, "*Hi, Miss.*" (I was often assumed to be a teacher).

"They have the confidence," Mina, a faculty member at the University of Seychelles, told me, "to say something to you on the street. But they're not confident in the classroom."

This was the troubling element of young men's sociality – the idea that they ought to have been in school, instead. *Ti men* as a term overlaps with the government categorisation of a youth cohort aged 15-24 years in the collection of national employment statistics. In reality, it likely extends outside these boundaries, particularly at the lower limit – ten-year-old boys refer to each other as *ti men* on the playground – but was often treated by interlocutors as bounded. As a category, it is similar to 'youth' as it is employed across the African continent, denoting someone who is not married and has not formed their own household separate from that of their parents, and thus cannot be said to have reached adulthood (Christiansen, et al. 2006:21; Vigh 2009:96). The category is only loosely related to age, as the ability to take on these 'adult responsibilities' must be understood in relational terms (Bucholtz 2002:531). While some of the regional literature figures African youths as facing unique challenges in relation to modern economic and social conditions (Abbink 2005), the nature of neoliberal structures positions increasing numbers of young people as "precarious" in relation to established markers of adulthood (Butler 2011). The

fact that ‘youth’ is so often placed at the centre of ‘crisis,’ is, in each context that it occurs in, a product of specific histories.

In Seychelles, these concerns must be understood in the context of a history of youths as “seeds” of socialist project, and the longer history of the importation of enslaved Africans. Throughout the history of Seychelles, it has been assumed that proper cultivation is necessary in order to produce a particular kind of moral subject and that, without education of an appropriate sort, this cultivation cannot occur. The paternalistic quality of this idea is no accident, but derives from the coloniality embedded in relationships. The temporality encoded in the term ‘precarity’ – the idea of leading a temporary and disposable life in relation to a settled ideal – is in many ways quintessentially Creole.

The ‘crisis’ of youth is linked in Seychelles to a persistent attainment gap between boys and girls in school, and the narrative that links this to unemployment, substance abuse, and consequently incarceration (Geisler and Pardiwalla 2010; Ministry of Social Affairs 2014). All of these are linked to moral lapses on the part of young people, who want too much and “do not want to work” in order to get it. Thelma, who had been an educator for many years, told me that she understood conspicuous idling and educational malaise in terms of a natural desire of young men to exert authority over those around them. For her, this was an inherent impulse that all young men cross-culturally necessarily felt, and the moral failure that created ‘social ills’ was on the part of parents who failed to constrain this desire. This was echoed by other interlocutors within education, who were primarily concerned with ‘discipline’ and could cite violent, upsetting assaults by young men against teachers as evidence of its breakdown. The solution was therefore to try to limit the exposure that young men might have to cultural forces that would exacerbate their aggression and desire for autonomy, exemplified by rap music, American TV, junk food and

marijuana. It is worth noting that amongst families I knew, I encountered many reasons for young men to avoid school: they might be bullied by other young people, or simply tired of being told that they would not achieve anything by (likely well-meaning) adults.

There was thus a political undertone to this criticism, in the way its language echoed the ruling party's criticism of the LDS: that young people did not remember the *koudeta* or life before it, wanted unearned hand-outs, and would support a party that promised them material wealth instead of voting for the existing order out of gratitude. Furthermore, LDS had struck a chord amongst the electorate with a song released by the artist Ras Ricky in the run-up to the presidential election of 2015. Playing on the name of an LDS MNA, Pat Pillay, the refrain ran:

Pile! Pil lo li!

Which means "Stomp! Stomp on him!" There was widespread concern about this song throughout my time in Seychelles – not, I was made to understand, because anyone was opposed to democratic multi-party politics, but because it might encourage stomping among those who didn't know better. The song was popular in London, at the opposition *bal Seselwa*, but even interlocutors who described themselves as apolitical derived hope from its widespread popularity and, crucially, the fact that it had been criticised rather than suppressed. Joenise, a London-based interlocutor (mother to Vanessa and Shane, and aunt to Philomena – see Chapter 1), said that she derived hope from the fact that young people were outspoken politically.

But *ti men* drew criticism from their elders across the political spectrum, because their attire and the hip-hop they listened to identified them as part of a generation who valorised black American aesthetics. The rap collective *Zanfan Move* (Bad Boys) typified this style and the violence that was assumed to accompany it – one member was alleged to

have stabbed a tourist in a nightclub, an incident that was always discussed disapprovingly, and yet not without a certain amount of relish. Their track *Kraze* (“Mock”) identified them as part of this group through the line “*Nou menm la bann ti men*” (almost a direct translation of Wiz Khalifa’s *We Dem Boyz*), and taunted their critics:

Mon sa pti men I’m dat boi³⁹
Ki zot kontan Who y’all love
Zot kontan kraze Y’all love to mock

Nonetheless, not all of the older generation were critical. Jimmy Savy, C.E.O. of the National Arts Council, allowed that “all men were at one time *ti men*” and advocated sympathy and generosity on the part of the older generation (*Seychelles Nation* 2012). In this view, the state of being a *ti men* was naturally limited by time and the capacity for growth. When I interviewed Savy he was very frank about times that he had been ‘outside’, seeking the help of older men who might allow him a way ‘in’ to higher education, the music industry, and the arts sector. He treated the process of negotiating his way ‘inside’ as a rite of passage. But Josh, a young musician, replied to my question about the use of the term with exasperation. “It’s just what everyone used to say when I was a kid, like if you were calling your friend over, you’d say, ‘*Ti men, vini* (come here)’, but then they turned it into something negative.” While he was grateful for the generosity of elders in the music industry, he experienced the term as a passive-aggressive put-down from older men. Rather than all men having been *ti men*, he asserted that *ti men* was used in a highly-specific way to keep young men outside.

However, it is significant that it was not only young men that were kept outside. While older men perhaps performed this kind of gatekeeping with their own youth in the

³⁹ In this translation, I have prioritised tone and intertextuality over grammar.

NYS (to be explored further in section) in mind, they were perhaps also aware that financial success and stability could not be taken for granted.

Drol men

If substance abuse was one of the reasons given for keeping young men outside the house, this was rooted not only in moral conservatism but in measurable health outcomes (Alwan, et al. 2011). But the narrative of failure to reach a bounded and stable 'adulthood' obscures the fact that the peripheral status of men relative to the home and family (discussed throughout Part II) means that it is possible, and likely, that men will find themselves entirely 'outside' at various points throughout their lives. Men who, through the judgement of their behaviour as antisocial, found themselves in this position were often referred to as '*drol*' (literally 'funny'). However, antisocial behaviour was related not only to historical male relationships with the house, but to the more recent militarization of everyday life.

While I sometimes heard women in Seychelles joke that men were "useless", being kept outside the house was justified not by the idea that men were less competent and reliable but through their perceived capacity for violence. Interlocutors, discussing family, asked if my male relatives had done "bad things" as theirs sometimes had. From this, I understood that part of the concern surrounding the violence and desire for autonomy of youths was implicitly about what men might be inclined to do if they were not properly policed by women. In particular, drug use and excessive consumption of alcohol were regarded negatively.

While prodigious consumption of alcohol is an accepted part of sociality in Seychelles, alcoholism was profoundly isolating, particularly if the man in question was

known to become *drol* (used euphemistically to mean aggressive or uncooperative) while drunk. I knew men whose alcoholism was sufficiently functional that they were able to keep up regular employment, but whose leisure time revolved solely around the consumption of alcohol. While it was rare for anyone to give up alcohol entirely, the few interlocutors who had were men who did not want to repeat patterns within their own families and upbringing. There were few discursive conventions for talking about alcohol or addiction, outside of the new vocabulary of evangelical Christianity, and instead men who habitually drank to excess were carefully kept at arm's length from the daily life of the house. Grandad Paul, though he was often in the house, was not fully of it; he spent much of his day in the yard, drinking with sons and friends who passed by, an arrangement that suited Granny Cecile as it allowed her to exercise her power over the domestic domain. This idea of limited access to the household was familiar to interlocutors, and Mina told me that, "the man, the son, might be outside, but you can still take him a plate of food; you can still invite him in for a celebration."

A more serious alcohol problem could place a man out of range of sociality, and into a less geographically fixed way of living, as his interpersonal relationships deteriorated. Drug use likewise estranged men from the family home, and interlocutors distinguished this from alcohol abuse – as Mina put it, alcoholics could be invited into the home, "but when your son uses drugs, you can no longer trust him in the house." It was simply considered common sense that drug users would steal to support their habit.

As masculinity in Seychelles was produced in a context that had been heavily militarized during the Cold War period, the state intervened in the development of young male subjectivities in ways that both mitigated and reinforced the perceived male capacity for violence. There were widespread fears that drug use exacerbated this. Whilst heroin

was considered the most pressing problem in terms of its intersection with the lives of unemployed young men, one contingent of interlocutors was very concerned about cannabis and placed it in the same category as heroin (alcohol remained a separate category). This was a cohort aged thirty-five to fifty, many of whom had been part of the National Youth Service, which I will discuss later in more depth in the next section. Their conservatism on this issue stood in marked contrast to the attitudes of younger people, who regarded occasional use of cannabis as unproblematic, and older people, who had either used it in their youth or expressed interest in trying it as adults.⁴⁰ Any substance that was mood-altering and carried the potential for addiction was suspect – including caffeine, but excluding alcohol – and I was often confused about what interlocutors and government policy classified as a drug.

Men who were dealing with substance abuse issues were often referred to as “mad” (*fol*), an emic term that not only referred to these specific issues but to other kinds of antisocial behaviour. The following discussion of madness will focus on its social construction in relation to postcolonial life in Seychelles; I did not work directly with vulnerable people in my project⁴¹, and thus cannot claim to represent their experiences. Rather, I understand madness as a way of talking about particular forms of behaviour (stereotyped as male) that were considered abnormal or antisocial in terms of degree rather than content.

In other postcolonial Afro-diasporic contexts, the idea of madness has been used to condemn individual behaviours as socially unacceptable in relation to widespread norms (Potter and Phillips 2006:586). Potter and Phillips have written of this usage in relation to

⁴⁰ This cohort also tended to be more explicitly condemnatory of homosexuality as unnatural in the wake of its decriminalization.

⁴¹ It is nonetheless important that the term “mad” encompassed the behaviour of individuals within my own networks of kin and acquaintances, including people to whom I had strong emotional ties.

Bajan-British return-migrants, who were perceived by family and friends as “mad” in a way that was linked to Englishness (ibid. 590) – walking in the sun, walking and talking too quickly, and insisting on punctuality were all behaviour stigmatised as unusual and outside the Bajan norm (ibid. 591-2). Joenise had experienced criticism for just such traits from her Seychellois family and friends, but this was not framed as madness.

Instead, the first I heard of ‘madness’ was in Seychelles itself, where it was applied widely, not on the basis of knowledge of the mental health of others, but as a way of interpreting aspects of their appearance. An unshaven face, a wrinkled shirt, and bare feet could all be read as signs of madness. There were particular expected behaviours too: drunkenness, drug use, singing and dancing on the street, and wandering from place to place without a destination in mind. Mad men, I was told, wandered in and out of the house while they were talking – a condensed version of the dynamic described in the previous section, of being put out and then permitted in again. In this respect, the term stigmatised forms of behaviour that were highly gendered; specifically, an extension of everyday modes of masculinity. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, it was common for men to make extra money by securing work as ‘guides’ or drivers, and this was particularly visible in Victoria, where boat-loads of tourists disembarked from cruises at the port. *Pirat* (unregistered) taxi drivers importuned anyone whose appearance suggested they might be a foreigner. This was socially acceptable, but to beg tourists for small sums of money with which to purchase cigarettes and alcohol – as some men did – indicated obvious marginality. Here, as in the case of *ti men*, the line between accepted male behaviour – an aggressive quest for work as a guide or a driver – and stigmatised behaviour – the more limited request for a specific monetary sum – was blurry.

I do not wish to underplay the extent to which the term might also apply to diagnosable mental illness, but discussing it in these terms is beyond the remit of this thesis. I only wish to emphasise that here, as in other postcolonial settings, I do not think that there is a clear line between what might be classed psychologically as “delusion” (Kiev 1963; London 1986) and what might be understood as a well-founded fear (Hickling and Hutchinson 2000:94). Men who were considered mad were sometimes invested in deeply invested in conspiracy theories, and the idea that they were being constantly surveyed by shadowy forces, both of which had obvious points of convergence with the language of the ‘occult’ (or at least occult-adjacent) economy in which other Seychellois participated (see Chapter 4). From a Western biomedical perspective, they might be seen to belong to a discrete population of Afro-diasporic men who present symptoms that appear similar to schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other dissociative conditions (London 1986:266). But in Seychelles, as in other postcolonial contexts, such symptoms are psycho-social; they cannot be understood without some understanding of racist structures and the mental load created by these (Hickling and Hutchinson 2000:94). Given the tensions around appearance, and the intense scrutiny to which Seychellois were subjected by both foreigners and other Seychellois (see Chapter 3), it was never entirely clear how this supposedly pathological paranoia was distinguishable from a perfectly comprehensible level of paranoia about party politics, nosy neighbours, and gossip.

Men who were categorised as mad often had a kind of freedom to speak freely in public, to rebuke others, and to sing along loudly with the LDS anthem:

Pile! Pil lo li! Pile! Pil lo li!

Madness was thus distinguished from mere mental illness by its political dimension.

Supporters of both the ruling party and the opposition accused one another of buying the

votes of alcoholics, drug users, and those suffering from mental illness, who were considered the easiest part of the population to identify and manipulate in this way. At the same time, the fact of madness was disputed for its perceived instrumental quality.

When I visited Rayna and Mervyn, they brought it up independently, a propos of a group who were sitting outside the Indian shop and who asked Mervyn for money. Mervyn was suspicious that they were even mad at all. He had once responded to such a request by saying, "If you're mad, go and walk down the middle of the road." The man refused to; therefore, Mervyn said, his madness was an act. As we were discussing this, sitting at a bus stop in the South, the man in question approached along the street.

"Watch," Mervyn said.

As soon as he drew closer to us, his walk became exaggerated, a grotesque, rolling limp, and he began whooping and yelping to himself. When he passed, Rayna said something that surprised me.

"You know, he was in the army when they did *koudeta*," she said quietly, "and he said that they gave them *something* before they did it. You know, some drugs or something."

I already knew this story, which may well be apocryphal. James Mancham, narrating the events around the coup, specified that the militiamen who threw out the ruling party were given a "pep-up pill" or, if they were unwilling to participate, a sleeping pill that would prevent them from ever knowing what had transpired that morning (1983:209). Maxime Ferrari, doctor and member of the rebel party, was said to have dispensed these pills, along with a shot of Scotch, at the house of the party leader in L'Exile. In his autobiography, he denies this version of events (Ferrari 1999:155), but I do not mention the claim in order to assess its truth. The story had the hallmarks of other

conventional narratives of violence in Seychelles, in its echoes of the unnatural consumption that was part of *grigri*. It also resembled revolutionary narratives from the African continent, such as that of the “blood oath” taken by Mau Mau revolutionaries. In this story, unnatural consumption, drug use and masculinity combined; given the antisocial dimensions of these elements, and their existence outside the house, it is not surprising that they were combined in the genesis of the new nation.

*Lazenes*⁴²



Figure 28. The former NYS Village at Cap Ternay, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

The *koudeta* of 1977, less than a year after Seychelles was declared independent from Great Britain, saw the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) ousted by the Seychelles People’s United Party (SPUP) while President James Mancham was visiting London on state business.

⁴² ‘Youth.’

Mancham himself described a violent upheaval and a world forever changed (1983:212-15).

But interlocutors who had been in Seychelles at the time were sanguine and somewhat ironic about what they saw as one of a string of disruptions to life as they had known it.

Vania, who had come of age during this period, summarised events for me:

“We had the Independence [...] One year later, I was ten years old, in 1977, we had the coup. And that was – I was at home there, I remember that day and we heard on the radio that Mr René has taken over responsibility of the country blah blah blah, that everybody should stay at home. So one day I went to sleep at night, I was still a British citizen. The next day I woke up, I was a Republican one. Then one year later things changed again. I went to sleep at night, I woke up, I was told there is a curfew, and things have changed. And if anybody sees you on the road they will shoot you at sight, and what-not-else.”

Culture worker and artist Peter Pierre-Louis had recently gone to work as usual on a public holiday. “And I am sitting at my desk, there is no one around, and I think to myself, ‘Has there been another *koudeta*?’”

I have already described the impact of the *koudeta* on understandings of nationhood and diaspora (Introduction), and the revaluation of the Kreol language and Afro-Creole heritage (Chapter 1). I have considered the way that the landscape was remade through the redistribution of land and centring of the district (Chapter 2), as well as the ramifications of the culture of surveillance engendered by the State of Emergency (Chapter 3; Chapter 4). In this section I want to consider the impact of the *koudeta* on education, not simply in terms of the forms of knowledge that were valued, but in its revaluing of the world outside the house as a basis for nationhood. I will argue that the idea of education in the SPPF era was premised on the importance of removing children from the house, and that in this respect it drew on colonial ideas.

The SPPF were critical of the colonial education system, which they characterised as two-tiered: the *grann blan* class had the means to send children to private schools and educate them abroad, while the Afro-Creole majority had to accept a sub-standard state

education, or (as mentioned in Chapter 1) the repressive disciplinarian atmosphere of schools run by the Catholic and Anglican churches. Interlocutors, even those who had belonged to the 'privileged' class or were nostalgic for colonialism, agreed with this assessment and did not mourn a system that had stigmatised the Kreol language and punished children for speaking their mother tongue. Yet the punitive dimension of colonial education (see Chapter 1) was so thoroughly entrenched that it was difficult to remove entirely.

In fact, colonial restrictions on Kreol use must be understood in relation to the broader aims of Catholic and Anglican schools at the time: educating Seychellois into an appropriate moral subjectivity, against what was perceived to be their nature. One 19th century Anglican priest contended that "wickedness in all its forms" was so deeply engrained in Seychellois that any success in educating them was miraculous, but Afro-Creole children were singled out for special attention due to the "turbulence" that might become part of their disposition after the abolition of slavery (Taylor 2005:101).

Practically, this was addressed by removing children (as much as possible) from their existing social world. The Mission Lodge school at Sans Souci – in the present day, a ruin that is maintained as a heritage site – is one example of this kind of removal. In 1876, the Anglican Church Missionary Society founded a school for "Liberated African" children who were transported to Mahé. The children worked on the surrounding land, cultivating vanilla and cocoa as "training" for future plantation work (Taylor 2005:239); profits went towards the upkeep of the settlement and the Church Missionary Society. They dwelt in Venn's Town, a 'village' constructed nearby solely for this purpose. As the hills are far from the town, during the 19th century the school would have been extremely isolated, but this

isolation – away from the perceived immorality of the Creole family – was treated as entirely necessary.

This separation from the home was replicated to some extent in SPPF education policy. The policy of ‘zoning’ and concomitant emphasis on the district redistributed some of the affective power surrounding the house, the church and the domestic towards the new political reality, the new public sphere. More importantly, the National Youth Service (NYS) was launched in 1982. This was established with the help of two UNESCO consultants and was intended for young people nearing the end of compulsory education; it was mandatory, and young people who left would not be able to complete their A Levels. NYS was intended to create a generation of young, revolutionary Afro-Creole subjects. They were to live in one of three ‘*Vilaz Lazenés*’ (‘Youth Villages’), at Port Launay, or Cap Ternay, or on the nearby island of St Anne. Through spatial separation from their families, it was hoped that they would form strong bonds within their respective ‘clusters’ (the name given to each mixed-age class across cohorts). The villages were to be self-sufficient, with young people farming and picking fruit and vegetables, fishing and butchering livestock; everyone had to participate in cleaning and other chores; and tasks were rotated regularly. Many of my interlocutors belonged to the age cohort who had experienced an NYS education (the Service was disbanded in 1998). Certain tropes recurred in interlocutors’ accounts: the importance of a neatly-made bed, and a clean, pressed uniform; the military discipline, and the fact that they both drilled and saluted the Seychelles flag. There was a conscious reference to other Cold War Socialisms in the way that agricultural labour, youth, masculinity and militarism were valued and conflated (Wilson 2014:61), so much so that Seychellois still refer to NYS as “Cuban” in approach.

I had at first been reluctant to ask about NYS lest it be too politicised, too much a remnant of the pre-1991 socialist past, but interlocutors often had very fond memories of the experience. Ernest, an artist, reminisced about collecting birds' eggs on Desroches Island with a male relative of mine. The youths had to wear broad-brimmed hats because the birds would peck at them. The eggs themselves were small and brightly coloured, blue, purple, and orange, and their consumption is now heavily restricted, which gave the memory a patina of prelapsarian abundance. Other interlocutors, now working within the arts, had first decided to become artists while in NYS.

The arts, in NYS, were grouped into the "Culture block", and topics of study included the construction of traditional homes, using traditional art and textile techniques, and the importance of "the oral tradition", in combination with modern art-forms. Musician Keven Valentin located the teaching at NYS within a broader national approach, a kind of militarisation of the arts in which "You sing in Kreol, but the *teks* [lyrics] were oriented - mercenary, politics, you know?" He was the first interlocutor I spoke to who emphasised the fact that the National Troupe, young dancers chosen to represent the best of traditional dance in Seychelles, was also a *troop* in the military sense. (This strict approach informed his relationships with his band and dancers in the present day, as I found when I bumped into a stern lecture on standards and the importance of practice that he was administering prior to a live show).

During the course of an average day at NYS, children would attend classes, where they were instructed by teachers as usual. Leonard, a painter and art teacher who began his career under the NYS system, remembered fondly the military discipline and "boot-camp" atmosphere of the Village. Like many interlocutors, he expressed nostalgia for a system that had enforced mixing amongst social classes, something that he felt had

disappeared altogether. Jean-Claude Mahoune was of the older generation who did not attend NYS, but he too emphasised that this social mobility had been profound and had complete overturned his own conceptions of the racial and colour hierarchies that had existed before.

NYS activities were orchestrated by adult *animateurs* (animaters) who lived, one per cluster, amongst the young people and provided pastoral guidance as well as ensuring that they adhered to strict rules of presentation and comportment. For some interlocutors, working as an *animateur* had been a bridge between studying and teaching art. For Keven Valentin and others, it had encouraged them to study stagecraft and choreography, and to move into directing theatrical productions. Artistic subjects in NYS were often taught with a view to encouraging participation in extracurricular competitions and talent shows, and this remains an important mode of engagement with creativity for young Seychellois today.

Interlocutors spoke fondly of NYS, but not without a little defensiveness. “You have this in your country, yes?” they would say, or they would draw parallels with other national service schemes, as if to underline that there had been nothing sinister or Soviet in it. Tony Mathiot, who had finished his schooling before the scheme had been developed, said, “I expect you’ve heard a lot of bad things about it, but it was really wonderful, and I wish I’d had the opportunity to go.” (This assumption may have been predicated on my coming from London, where so many of the opposition supporters fled). When NYS was launched, there were mass youth protests against it, primarily because it was taken to be an example of repressive socialism and an attempt at brainwashing. This idea made its way even into retellings of popular folktales:

There was Brer Sounboula⁴³ who acted bad all the time. He said he would start a school. He said to Mama Tig [Tiger] to give him her brood of children to teach in the school. That way

⁴³ A trickster figure, much like the Brer Rabbit of black American folklore.

her children would learn to read well. Mama Tig said to him, "Yes, I give you my children to have school."

There were seven children in all, and they went to Soungoula's school as if it were a *lekol kolez* [a regular school]. Soungoula said to Mama Tig, "Don't come [too] often to see the children, because they'll get hung up, they'll follow you. Come see them every two weeks." (attributed to a "Praslin narrator", in Haring 2007:76)

The suspicion never really went away. Colette, who attended NYS in one of the very last cohorts (during the 1990s) and now works in the media, told me, "Sometimes I do wonder if it was a bit like brainwashing. But I think by the time I was there, it had really improved a lot. The first few years, it was very badly organised."

Colette was far from the only woman I spoke to who found participation in NYS rewarding, but it often seemed that young men benefited from it in a way that women could not have. NYS provided an opportunity for men to develop the kind of robust, spatially condensed networks that women have traditionally dominated in Seychelles (Benedict and Benedict 1982:262), and many of my male interlocutors had maintained strong friendships with other members of their cluster. This continued to have both emotional and professional benefits. Such networks are a historical anomaly, a profound counterpoint to the atomised male sociality described as the historical norm.

It seems likely that the self-consciously masculine character of NYS contributed to the peculiarly male character of the arts today. At NYS, young people were encouraged to make a break with the 'inside' that was profoundly upsetting for some. Unlike the accusations of 'brainwashing' and indoctrination, these memories never formed the basis of a politicised critique of NYS, but continue to affect NYS alumni in the present day. Rayna was one of the women who felt this ongoing impact. She had been close to her mum, and had not felt comfortable being separated from her – and she had not liked the food, which she characterised as dirty. As she was from a poor background, dropping out meant she could not continue A Levels and restricted her career opportunities; it was only through

determination and luck that she was eventually able to get a good job. In contrast, Rose was from a foreign family, but she had been raised in Seychelles and was subject to the same expectations as her classmates under the socialist regime. While at NYS she had developed an eating disorder she had struggled to recover from. Like Rayna, in discussing this with me she had used language implying that the food prepared by her cluster was somehow dirty, unsafe to consume. Unlike Rayna, her family's financial security meant that after dropping out she was able to continue her education overseas.

It is not self-evident that the militaristic nature of life in NYS was inherently masculine. Instead, I would argue that scheme broke down spatial divisions between inside and out, and, implicitly, gender distinctions. It did this radically, favouring the *outside*, revaluing it as the site of the production of national consciousness. This was possible because of an existing association, not just between women and the house, but between men and the woods. Thelma, who outlined the distinction between inside and outside so clearly (in Chapter 3), certainly felt that it was the case that NYS had redressed the balance between men and women by encouraging male engagement with household tasks, at the same time as it took women outside into wild spaces. "NYS did a bit this," she told me.

"But then it also – did something else. Because NYS came a few years within the Independence era if you want, and the development rush that we went through, it sort of became redundant in a sense. Because people then started living in flats, you have no outside and have nothing, so the male had to do what the female used to do as well."

Thelma's point about the 'redundant' nature of the skills acquired by young people resonated within a landscape that was littered with the evidence of futures that never transpired (see Chapter 2), whether in the form of the old NYS villages, once-glamorous hotels, or state buildings on land that had been sold for resort development. After 1991, when there was an official return to multi-party democracy, NYS went into decline, and was

eventually disbanded in 1999. Ras Ricky dates the genesis of the political song *Pil Lo Li* to this moment:

The song is more like the traditional creole music and dance that when you got tired of working in the farm and field; as a slave you would sing that type of song. Most people call it '*moutya*' but it's not that exactly. They get tired and they stomp their feet, and they don't want to go back to the fields. They did that movement of stomping their feet.

In 1999 when the NYS flag was coming down, I was there. We didn't want that flag to come down because we did see that it brought the youths together. It built them up; how to cook your own food, how to dress well, everything. Your closet needs to be tidy, wake up and make your bed, focus on studies, etc. We thought to ourselves, if they are going to close down that place what are the other youths going to do after secondary school? Get into society just like that? Some parents don't even care about it. We used to go to school with SCR25 in our pockets or even just SCR5 because our parents couldn't afford more.

But education was still important. From all this, when that flag was coming down this is what the youths were talking about. And [current President] Danny Faure was standing there, the minister for Education at that time. Then everybody was singing that song, "*Pile! Pile lo li!*" And they were stomping on that flag.

(*Today in Seychelles* 2016)

After the dissolution of NYS, this harkening back to a particular slave past assumed a special importance for both masculine identities and the identity of the nation, which became bound up with the fugitive quality and the resourcefulness of these figures.

Marons

This section explores the association between wild spaces and *marons* (maroon slaves) as the basis for nation-building outside the house and the town. The spatial logic of NYS villages did not simply refigure the woods and the wild as sites for nation-building, but built on an existing history of resistance in the hills and the forest – one that begins with maroon (runaway) slaves. The character of this history is masculine; it is male isolation in its heroic, fugitive (albeit dangerous) mode. Male artists, especially "archivists," identify with maroons as figures, and produce art about them. Significantly, these figures are not only revolutionary, but symbolic of the absorption of revolution into an existing world order – a

feeling that many artists, as either former SPPF or LDS activists incorporated into a larger state machinery, can identify with.

Marronage was part of the life of the colony from its early days until abolition occurred, but some instances remain in the public consciousness more than others. Enslaved individuals sometimes escaped to live in the forest, in acts of what is known as *petit marronage*. Particular places continue to be associated with these histories. The name La Misere (situated in the hills in the northern part of Mahé) references a history of poverty, when the inaccessibility of the densely-wooded hillsides of the Trois Frères mountains meant that their inhabitants were easily cut off from the resources available to the coastal villages – misery in this sense is implicitly the misery of hunger (Benedict and Benedict 1982:30). Machabée is memorialised in the name of a beach at the northernmost point of Mahé, which overlooks the small Inner Island of Silhouette that he escaped to.

Grand marronage, which refers to more organised uprisings and rebellions, was less common. In 1803, an enslaved man named Lubin instigated a rebellion that began with a “tribal ceremony” which “consisted in rubbing the foreheads and bodies of those present with human fat. Once the ceremony was over, Lubin stood up and, as if in a trance, said, ‘Friends, I am your Leader, and today you are free.’ The other slaves were completely won over, and began singing that Lubin was their king” (Taylor 2005:16). Lubin’s leadership was apparently accepted by the planters, though this transpired to be a ruse, and he was murdered by them in short order (ibid. 17).⁴⁴ More well-known is the story of Castor, whose life was the subject of a musical production by Patrick Victor. His *grand marronage* was prompted by the rumours of imminent abolition of slavery during the 1820s. After his escape, he lived in the forest for five years, but eventually surrendered his freedom and (in

⁴⁴ This story was not circulated among my interlocutors – I quote it here because of its formal similarity to the story of the *koudeta*.

1832) was put to work as a double-agent on behalf of the French. Lionnet concludes his retelling of these events with the remark that “the heroes end up very often as watchdog!” (2011).

The history of maroons across the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds is one of heroic resistance that also nonetheless involved elements of complicity with the plantation (Mackie 2005:35) though complicity, in this sense, existed on a spectrum. In the Caribbean, the survival of maroon communities was sometimes ensured through the agreement of treaties with colonial powers (ibid. 42-3); in Seychelles, McAteer has suggested that slave rebellions were sometimes sponsored by white planters keen to appropriate land from others of their class (1991:190). However, this note of complicity does not conflict entirely with ruling party ideals, so that Castor’s fame in the context of state *kreolite* is unsurprising. Victor, one of the best known and most prolific recording artists in Seychelles, is firmly embraced by Parti Lepep and often takes an active role in organising festivals and culture workshops. Unprompted, he told me that as a young man he was passionately involved in the process of nation-building, but that his attitude now is more relaxed. The revolutionary work has been accomplished, and he is unbothered by the idea of a transfer of power provided that it serves the will of the Seychellois people. This attitude was shared by many others of his generation: revolution had been appropriate in the 1970s and 1980s, but was not necessarily what was called-for now.

“But me, I don’t like Castor,” Vincent Milius, poet and historian, told me. “I like Pompée. He is the real hero. He didn’t betray his principles.”

Pompée was responsible for the murder of a French plantation manager in 1809, and was captured and burned at the stake near the Moosa River. He was the subject of several works by the painter and sculptor Egbert Marday, subsequently displayed as part of

Festival Kreol 2016. Some are representations on canvas of slaves in the fields, or being flogged, or of the execution itself. Others are assemblages of found objects, welded into vaguely 'African' masks with gaping mouths. Marday himself lives in La Misere, and stressed to me the need to portray painful and difficult experiences as part of Creole identity. Like many other male artists, he (half-jokingly) described his early experiences with art as a struggle, portraying himself as the "artist-hero" of his form at the district school he attended. Other forms had their own heroes, and these boys would face off against one another, competing to attract the most acclaim for their sketches of comic book supermen and cowboys.



Figure 29. Masks by Egbert Marday, at La Misere. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

The current discourse of Seychellois *kreolite* has dealt with the topic of slavery in certain conventional ways, emphasising its allegedly benign nature in Seychelles and the idea of

African complicity. In particular, several of my interlocutors, drawing on Bob Marley's lyrics and the mysticism prevalent throughout reggae, were fond of framing this history in terms of "mental slavery," though they understood this as far more damning of African agency than its original proponents did. While the realities of slavery were half-articulated in public discourse, they could be expressed more fully through stories of flight and resistance, as *marronage* was presented as something that men "chose, out of thirst for freedom" (Lionnet 2011). Maroon narratives could be both part of a broad framing of masculinity *and* endorsed by a ruling party keen to keep individualism within certain bounds, because the violence associated with *marronage* could be refigured as a struggle for what would eventually become the nation. As in La Réunion, the maroon slave was an alternative African "father-warrior" whose masculinity equalled or rivalled that of the colonial paterfamilias (Vergès 1999:43), emblematic of the new nation. But, just as Victor speculated that the time for nation-building was now over, such stories were no longer circulated in the way that they had been in the SPPF era.

Maroons had acquired a special significance for male artists of a certain age, but the continued potency of this imagery was not assured, as the way that young people were educated to be citizens was changing. Those who had been through the NYS system had not only learned the history of slavery in fairly explicit terms, but (in the Culture block) might have written dramatic works on this topic (Le Brun 1982:18). The sculpture *Zonm Lib* ('free man'), which stands outside the former Part Lepep headquarters in Pier Ward, is one of the most public manifestations of the conflation of the history of slavery with the politics of the 20th century. With its raised arms and broken chains, it evokes ideas of *marronage* and emancipation from slavery, even as it commemorates the date of the *koudeta* and is linked in the public imaginary with violence. The movement away from the politics of the Second Republic is a movement away from this history and imaginative vocabulary.

However, it is significant that maroons, through the kind of fugitive existence they led in the forests of the islands, were not only those who had fled the enforced cultivation of the plantation, but were cultivators in their own right (Carney and Rosomoff 2011:81). While this history has been difficult to trace in Seychelles, it is likely that maroon modes of subsistence were similar to those across the Atlantic world and the rest of the Indian Ocean (Alpers 2003). The act of maintaining a plot (see Chapter 2) forms a kind of continuity with the acts of plotting (escape, resistance, revenge) (Wynter 1971). In Seychelles, this correspondence means that there is space for an alternate figure of masculine resistance within the framework of *kreolite*: the *bonnonm dibwa*, the ‘man of the woods,’ a producer of herbal remedies.

Many school Heritage Clubs had their own ‘medicinal gardens’: usually a collection of pots containing plants brought by children from family gardens, if they had them. During summer holiday activities, the Jardin Du Roi spice garden, and the medicinal garden at Plain St Andre were used to teach children basic snippets of information about how to recognise each plant, and what it could be used for. Though traditional medicine will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter 6, it is necessary to note here that, through the involvement of herbalists in heritage discourses, the hills and woods were revalued as “insurgent cartographies” (Roane 2019:5) without explicit reference to African socialism being necessary. Both maroon and *bonnonm dibwa* were situated outside the household, yet acting in relation to it – the maroons through the stories of their night-time forays to steal from the yards of sleeping colonists; the herbalists through their participation in the gossip economy with which *grigri* and traditional medicine are enmeshed. There is an element of danger in both, hence their spatial removal from everyday life. This state of distance from the household has caused them to be identified with the larger space of the nation.

The figure of the maroon has been significant within Seychellois political consciousness as symbol of resistance. Before moving on to the figure of the exile, I would emphasise the capacity of maroons to act as double-agents, to make sudden reversals, is significant within the same context. As Patterson wrote of the Jamaican maroon Cudjoe's treaty with the British, "there is more to this extravagant show of humility than meets the eye. Is it perhaps the perfect *coup de grace* of the rebel slave [...] an expression of contempt for the white master by the very slave-like psychological technique of diverting the contempt on himself?" (Patterson 1970:315). Ideas of capitulation and collaboration, which can be recast as processes of compromise, pardoning and forgiveness, constitute the figure of the political exile.

Exiles

The hills of Seychelles have been constructed as a site of resistance, not only through the figure of the maroon, but also through the practice of exile. 20th century exiles to Seychelles were often celebrated and controversial figures across the colonial world. At the level of the nation, political figures from both sides of the divide have lived as exiles, while the identity of Seychellois in London is shaped by the idea. This notion of exile, because it draws on "black geographies" of exclusion (McKittrick 2011:955), even as it encompasses whiteness and claims to status, can be accommodated within state *kreolite*.

The history of exile to the islands has had consequences for the politics developed by the nascent nation in the 20th century. In 1801, Napoleon had exiled a group of would-be assassins to the islands (Lee 1976:40); but it was after the British gained possession of the archipelago in 1814 that Seychelles became a kind of "five star political gaol" for political prisoners and anticolonial agitators (ibid. 37). Kothari and Wilkinson have argued that the

policy of exile, the colonial use of spatial tactics to compel obedience, opened up new spaces for resistance in Seychelles (2010:697). Exiled rulers socialised among themselves and participated in wider networks of resistance, while Seychellois who came into contact with them were given a greater understanding of the possibilities of anticolonial action (ibid. 703). I would argue that these tactics, at a national rather than international level, simultaneously retrenched the association of certain spaces with resistance. What changed was idea of the hills as places characterised by the poverty of fugitivity; they became, instead, places of quiet grandeur.

In recognition of the fact that many of these exiles were men of some stature in their homelands – among them Sultans of Perak and Zanzibar, the Ashanti King Prempeh, and nationalist leaders from Egypt, Somaliland and Palestine – from which they were deported, they were kept in relatively luxurious seclusion in Seychelles. The need for privacy, not simply as a consequence of their status but on the part of a British government that wished to avoid scrutiny, meant that they were housed outside of the town, in private residences in the hills of Les Mamelles and Cascade districts. Colonial officials even felt at times that the deference shown to them was excessive, but the exiles themselves remained cognisant of their state of isolation and estrangement (Kothari and Wilkinson 2010:701).

Here the melancholy of exile overlapped with its aestheticization as “enriching” (Said 2000:137). For much of the 20th century, living in places far from the town retained an association with poverty, but the tendency of politicians to build well-appointed homes on the hillsides of Mahé has been part of a wider transformation. After his resignation from the presidency in 2004, René himself has lived somewhat reclusively at a house named L’Exile, near Sans Souci. His former ideological omnipresence (the acts of surveillance described in Part II were characterised, even by Lepep supporters, as Renéist)

has given way to this retreat, through which he has remained paradoxically visible. During my fieldwork there were continual rumours that he had passed away, which reached a fever-pitch whenever he travelled outside the country for necessary medical procedures; his hand was seen in policies enacted by his successors; his clothing and facial expressions were dissected on Facebook whenever he ventured into public settings.

Areas such as Sans Souci and La Misere are now perversely associated with extreme wealth, most visible in the form of the huge palace complex (belonging to Sheikh Khalifa, Emirati royal politician and current President of the United Arab Emirates) at La Misere, which on clear days can be seen from most points on the Eastern coast of Mahé. The gated private residences, five-star hotels, and fitness retreats that are now a feature of these hillside landscapes recast remoteness as peaceful solitude (Kothari and Wilkinson 2010:1407), and shift the association from blackness and resistance to internalised struggle, whiteness and wealth.

But exile *from* Seychelles has been an equally potent part of the national self-image. Exiles from Seychelles exist in a relation to the state that involves violence and intimidation, placing them ostensibly outside the nation. Several of my London interlocutors were LDS supporters, and there were distinctions between *bal Seselwa* organised by one political side as opposed to the other. There was often a different mix of attendees, and celebratory speeches were focused on “National Reconciliation” and the need for Seychellois of all backgrounds to cooperate. At one, two teenage girls performed the song ‘Going Back to the Seychelles’, written by James Mancham and forever associated with exile:

I’m going back to the Seychelles
Where the clock chimes twice
I’m going back to the Seychelles
Isles of paradise

Mancham epitomised this romantic idea of exile from Seychelles. For decades after his removal from the presidency, he personified the hopes and fears of his supporters. Dwelling quietly in London with his Swedish wife, he embodied a kind of dignity in the face of violence even as he continued to correspond with Seychellois news outlets and to make his presence felt from a distance. For *grann blan* families, an idea of government-in-exile was also lived out through covert movements against René's government; Gerard Hoarau's Movement Pour Le Resistance was one such manifestation of the idea that the balance could be restored, the nation put back on course. His death in 1989 was thus understood as a kind of martyrdom that had wider symbolic resonance for opposition supporters in London, who worried that they might encounter "victimization" should they return.

"Victimization" covered a wide range of possible forms of harm, some of which were overtly violent. Opposition families had relatives who were deported or imprisoned during the *koudeta*, while still others were related to those who had "disappeared" during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nina was from a *grann blan* family who had fled to Australia prior to Independence; patiently, she corrected my assumption that this flight was a response to their feelings about national self-determination, emphasising that her uncle had feared for his life.

But victimization had more quotidian manifestations. Denial of certain legal statuses (citizenship or residency) through one's application being rejected; being turned down for a loan or having an application for land denied; being refused employment or a wage commensurate with one's work; having one's ideas stolen; being bullied at work or by neighbours, who might gossip; being the object of occult attention and *grigri* could all be covered by this term. These annoyances and frustrations were also experienced by Seychellois who supported the ruling party, and by returnees as much as by fixed residents

in the islands. In making this clarification, I do not wish to assume the extent to which concern about minor forms of victimization was underwritten by fear of death and torture, but to draw attention to the way that the concept was predicated on pre-existing class and racial dynamics; on expectations and prior experiences as much as violence in the moment.

Important to this is a distinction between the status of the of exile and that of the refugee, a considerably less-romanticised figure (Malkki 1995:513). As I have mentioned, not all opposition supporters were wealthy or white, or could lay claim to the kinds of power afforded the former plantocracy. I knew a black Afro-Creole family who had been forcibly exiled from Seychelles and had entered the U.K. seeking asylum, and whose position was marked by marginal economic status in London. For them, the difficulty of return to Seychelles was drawn less from “victimization” than from the reality of their financial resources.

Most of my London-based interlocutors were not from *grann blan* backgrounds. Their political allegiance was subtler and might be indicated to me by tentative references to “the political situation” or the suggestion that Seychelles was “in some ways like a dictatorship.” They were thus broadly critical of government even if they were not actively opposed to it, and cautious of the kinds of harm that could exist for members of the community regardless of status. Hoarau’s case, which had depended on his surveillance by the SPPF government, illustrated a general need for caution in expressing political views publicly. The fact that such harm could exist transnationally revealed the ways that it was predicated on intimacy.

It was this same intimacy that meant that the “arrow-like trajectory” of exile (Glissant 1997:12) could be reversed. Exiles could be pardoned by the state and brought back in – but along the same path, as though the relationship ran along a single plane.

Here, again, Mancham was the exemplar. He returned to Seychelles in 1992, after multi-partyism was reintroduced, but he was never again active in party politics (aside from writing occasional orotund letters to *The Nation*). His return was accepted by the ruling party, who very publicly forgave him for his years as their opponent. At the opening of Carnaval in 2016, I saw him sitting with the Parti Lepep grandees in the seats a few rows ahead of me. His death, in January 2017, shocked supporters and opponents alike (I would speculate that it was especially shocking in light of the false rumours of René's death that had been circulating since November 2016).

Yet among the highly personal eulogies shared by many Seychellois, a competing narrative arose: he had sold out the opposition when he returned to Seychelles. Here, he was placed in the company of others who had more actively renounced the opposition and switched sides, among them Alain St Ange, former Minister for Tourism. However, there had been traffic in the opposite direction – Pat Pillay, the LDS MNA lauded in song by Ras Ricky, had originally been a member of the ruling party. This was partly linked, I would suggest, to the possibilities of public pardon that had historically been contained within resistance in Seychelles.

It was also related to the sense that identity as Seychellois was more significant than political identity. During my time in London, I was aware that interlocutors socialised across political boundaries, but I had assumed that this was due to the small size of community and the fact that many people conceptualised themselves as far from home. One group of Seychellois who participated in my project explained that they did so because “[you] are our people”, and interlocutors rarely questioned me as to my political views, seemingly more concerned with my sensitivity towards their own. Knowing nonetheless that political divisions were salient, I expected to encounter a more obvious boundary

between the two groups in Seychelles. While this boundary was evident, it was often transgressed. Artists and musicians in particular seemed happy to collaborate with little regard for political allegiance – for example, at a *bal Kreol* organised by SEYMAS (an association with many LDS members, including LDS Member of the National Assembly, Jeny Letourdie), an artist affiliated with the state was happy to act as compere. A male artist who was adamant that the opposition was made up of the ungrateful and lazy was nonetheless a friend and colleague to artists who voted LDS.

Part of this was a consequence of a new liberal atmosphere in Seychelles. (Mina told me that I had picked a good time to carry out my research). The LDS National Assembly majority compounded this sense that things were changing, and when Danny Faure became President, he was quick to assure the opposition that he would work alongside them. The word ‘reconciliation’ was heard much more frequently, and from the mouths of Parti Lepep officials. Liberation Day, the national holiday commemorating the coup, was abolished, as it had long been a source of distress for the opposition.

But more than this, supporters of both parties recognised each other as Seychellois, engaged in an intimate relationship that existed nationally and transnationally. This should not suggest harmony, either in terms of its implications for being Seychellois, or *not* being Seychellois. More dangerous than political antagonism was foreignness, something common to both white European ‘expats’ and ‘Indian’ migrant labourers. Foreigners were conceptualised as inherently threatening to the root of ‘Creole values’, *nou kiltir* (our culture). When political opponents wished to wound one another, they did so by accusing each other of foreignness (something that was always possible because this proximity to foreignness part of what produced the category ‘Creole’). Opposition activists were criticised for their involvement in politics in Seychelles if they made appeals to other forms

of citizenship. Uganda-born Danny Faure, as Vice President, was often rubbished as “an African” who knew nothing about politics.

Diasporas were therefore more troublesome to state *kreolite* than exiles, not simply because of the dichotomy between a group identity and an individual one implied by the two terms. Rather, their identities were not as straightforwardly constructed in relation to the nation-state. If they were from historical diasporas like the Kenya-borns, they might not be Seychelles citizens. If they had not been cast out of Seychelles, it was possible that they had left in order “to see the world”, as many interlocutors put it. Seychellois returning to live in Seychelles over the long-term, or those who had lived abroad for only a short time, were keen to stress how much they had missed it, how they could never conceive of finally settling anywhere else. The idea of preferring to live elsewhere was unthinkable; it was comparable to the statement that you did not speak Kreol because you had forgotten.

In this chapter, I have given an idea of how the world outside the house is constructed as masculine. It is figured as in some ways dangerous to the reproduction of *kreolite* – through the perception that men are antisocial or prone to violence, even as this same exteriority has also aligned men with the task of building the nation. Young men and ‘mad’ men are constructed as inherently exterior, and thus vulnerable to partisan politics; yet the alignment of this politicisation with exteriority and masculinity was, in the past, considered productive. During the immediate post-*koudeta* era, male peripherality in relation to the household was figured as part of a revolutionary, nationalist orientation. In particular, the historical association of men with wild spaces was enfolded into a revolutionary geography of Seychelles that, through the process of exile, has gradually come to be associated with luxury. This idea that wild places and practices can be revalued is an important element of *kreolite*, as will be evident in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: *Later* (Earth): Regeneration and Renaissance

Following from the association between men and wild spaces in the previous chapter, I will consider two practices associated with the 'outside' that are incorporated into state *kreolite*: traditional medicine and the musical genre *moutya*. Both are considered part of intangible cultural heritage, while in the case of *moutya*, Seychelles is actively seeking UNESCO recognition of this status. Both rely on the ideal boundaries described within previous chapters, both within and around the house (chapters 3 and 4) and between the house and 'outside' wild spaces (chapter 5). These boundaries are permeable and porous, frequently troubled by movement. The two practices that form the centre of this chapter, in contrast, involve the purposeful manipulation of such boundaries and categories, in a way that responds to specific materialities.

I have already touched on the importance of traditional medicine in relation to *grigri* and the figure of the *bonnonm dibwa*. In this chapter, I will focus on the logic underlying the use of traditional medicines via a meeting with one specific interlocutor. In contrast to Jean-Joseph Madeleine, who cut a sinister and theatrical figure in Chapter 4, I will describe the herbal practice of Ferdinand Vidot. *Moutya*, likewise, has already been mentioned as an object of tourist fascination and intense activity on the part of heritage practitioners. In this chapter, I will explore why, as a genre, it is described as 'medicinal' and life-giving; I will do this through references to multiple examples rather than one representative one as, for reasons that will become clear, I never witnessed 'real' *moutya* in the field.

Though they are now being incorporated into state *kreolite*, both traditional medicine and *moutya* have their own particular histories. These histories do involve

movement and change; both herbal remedies and *moutya* are products of diaspora, and are still part of transnational relationships, but the state now seeks to formalise them in a way that militates against further transformation for fear of losing something valuable. For traditional medicine, this means the movement of individual herbalists' knowledge (based on judgement, creativity and pragmatism) into spaces that also include more global, New Age remedies (with a capitalist bent) and the traditionally anti-social, arcane *grigri*. Herbal knowledge becomes part of a Creole archive, textualised and accessible to outsiders. *Moutya*, a genre traditionally associated with outside spaces, where it could be performed freely and in secret, is increasingly moving into structured performance spaces and formalised in order to facilitate this.

Medicine and *moutya* are both regenerative because they draw from earth as soil, which emplaces them in ways similar to the rooted discourses described in Chapter 1, and the property-based idea of *kreolite* described in Chapter 2. It is therefore unsurprising that they should be of interest to the nation-state, which requires their translation into new, global idioms and spaces. Formalisation, and the intrusion of respectability, mean that elements of the genre persisting from the slave past – African spiritual overtones, scathing or rude lyrics, and sexuality – are minimised and excised. Their capacity to facilitate the rebirth of Creole values, requiring formalisation and outside recognition, is at odds with regenerative power that is derived from secrecy.

Medicinal garden

This section sets out the materiality of herbal medicinal practice with reference to one practitioner, Ferdinand Vidot. In situating Ferdinand as an interlocutor, I describe the layout of his garden. The subsequent discussion develops the principle of regeneration

underlying traditional medicine, and what this idea means morally. While Ferdinand's viewpoint contrasts with that of the state's version of *kreolite*, and is even somewhat subversive in relation to it, this is due to the fact that herbal knowledge cannot be reduced to textual inventories of plant uses.

In speaking of traditional medicine in previous chapters, I have focused on the importance of plants as rooted and transplantable objects, the dark side of traditional medicine (*grigri*) and the *bonnonm dibwa* as an excluded masculine figure. Herbal medicine in these contexts is permeated by a degree of performativity, which is part of why it is valued by the state. Yet the professional herbalists to whom I was introduced by the Ministry of Culture occupied very different positions in relation to the value of traditional medicine. Madanm Andree, who sold noni berry⁴⁵ products, positioned herself as primarily a businesswoman, and the noni berry as "traditional" within a global marketplace of medicinal plants. Jean-Joseph Madeleine's facility with herbal remedies was as valuable to the state as his somewhat-dangerous image, and the aura of occult power that attached itself to him. Ferdinand Vidot, perhaps the most renowned and sought-after herbalist in Seychelles, took another, different approach. It was through Ferdinand that I gained some insight into the significance of herbal medicine apart from *grigri* and what interlocutors termed "superstition."

Ferdinand was not introduced to me by the Ministry, but I heard a great deal about him through other interlocutors. John Etienne (artist and director) considered him the real master of medicinal knowledge, while Helda Marie (poet) warned me that I should visit him while he was still around, as he was elderly. Several times, interlocutors offered to take me

⁴⁵ *Morinda citrifolia*, also known as *bwa torti* (literally 'tortoise wood') in Seychelles (Jeffery and Rotter 2016:300).; though Madanm Andree's was of a different variety, purchased abroad.

to see him, but nothing came of these offers. Towards the end of fieldwork, I got to know his daughter, Eglaloud-Rose, through work at Seychelles Heritage Foundation.⁴⁶ She often acted as an intermediary between Ferdinand and would-be visitors, especially those who were affiliated with the state in any way. One day, she mentioned to me in passing that she might take me to see him; a few days later, we met in town and rode in a company minibus into the hills. At the roadside, there was a small sign reading FERDINAND that could easily have been mistaken for that of a holiday accommodation. The driver turned down this road, following the rough dirt track to a whitewashed house.

At the front of the house, bright ornamental flowers stood in potted rows. An elderly, white-haired man stood at the veranda. We exchanged greetings and, as I found his Kreol difficult and he did not speak much English, Eglaloud acted as translator. She told me that she herself often records conversations with him, as she wants to preserve his knowledge.

He had grown up with herbal knowledge in his family, and had established the garden and the house in 1990, clearing trees in order to make space for each element. We walked around the grounds, starting at the covered way at the back of the house. The spatial arrangement reinforced for me the laboratory-like quality of gardens. On the patio, dried and prepared herbs were sorted into a large wooden pigeonhole system, each meticulously labelled. On the wall, there were printed A4 sheets summarising the purposes of each and the quantities in which they should be used. There was a desk, neatly stacked with files and papers. The covered way joined the house with another building – walking between the two, we observed bundles of herbs drying in the sun. Walking down towards the main garden area, a tangle of green became gradually legible to me as a precise

⁴⁶Loudeloud-Rose was at that time Education Officer, and spoke to me in that capacity, but is at the time of writing CEO.

arrangement of trees, planted in rows; between and around some of these, companion species sprouted. Vanilla grew around the Madagascar cherry, *bilenbi maron*⁴⁷ beside the *karanbol* (starfruit).⁴⁸ There were young saplings growing in one quadrant, shrubs in another, and the whole garden was fringed with palms. It was a landscape at once made and grown, in which everything had a role. As Ferdinand spoke, I understood what I was looking at as the material expression of a philosophy of healing – one that was based on a general tendency of things to heal, but also to die; and also on the necessity of harm within the process of healing. It was a feeling not unlike peering into part of someone else’s brain, and yet – as the follow analysis will show – it was influenced by more than Ferdinand’s own thinking.



Figure 30. The garden of Ferdinand Vidot, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

⁴⁷ Latin name *averrhoa bilimbi*, belonging to the family *Oxalidaceae*. It bears sour yellow fruit and is used to treat diabetes, as well as various forms of inflammation (Alhassan and Qamar 2016).

⁴⁸ Starfruit - *averrhoa carambola*, also belonging to the family *Oxalidaceae*. Its fruits are yellow, star-shaped and sweet.



Figure 31. The exterior of the house. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Regeneration

For Ferdinand and other interlocutors, the natural tendency of people to heal but also to die was related to a similar tendency in plants. These similarities between plants and people formed the basis of the interaction between the blood (*disan*) and herbal remedies.

Ferdinand spoke frequently of death, but without any theatricality – he did not hint at any ability on his part to cause death, nor to manufacture the life-after-death embodied by the *nanm* (ghost) and *dondosya* (zombie). His conversation was focused on the “virtues” of plants, their ability to mitigate the effects of age and infirmity. Many of his descriptions of plants emphasised their ability to “*netway-e disan e don disan*” – to clean the blood and renew it. Some medicinal plants also had the ability to renew organs, particular the kidneys and liver – those parts of the body most depleted by the process of removing toxins.

Plants were able to regenerate the body, I knew, partly via analogy. This was the other side of the metaphorical notion (described in Chapter 1) that people are in an abstract sense like plants; there were very concrete ways that plants were considered to be like people. This was not a theory of personhood, or of direct equivalence between plants and people, only a way of understanding physical characteristics, sometimes by direct visual comparison. The *coco de mer* nut is an extreme example, and Ferdinand spoke fondly of this “miraculous plant” which, with its two sexes that grew beside one another, illustrated an ideal gendered order (“Men should support women,” Egla translated, nodding approvingly). There were less illustrious resemblances between plants and people: Rayna showed me, in her garden, some small white chillies that are supposed to resemble penises (see below).

Plant growth was compared more generally to human growth and healing even in the absence of a direct physical resemblance. Both Egla and Rayna (on separate occasions) showed me the *gros bom*,⁴⁹ a plant with a roundish, scallop-edged leaf, that can regenerate seemingly endlessly. A cutting can be taken from any part of the plant, and it will sprout roots and transplant well. Rayna gave me a leaf from hers (see below), and told me to press it between the pages of a book – when I checked, days later, small, fine, hairy roots were growing from the edges of the leaf. Drinking *latizann* (a tisane) made from the leaf cured colds and fever, so that the regenerative capacity of the plant translated into its interaction with the body. Underlying this was an assumption that growth and regeneration were properties inherent to living things (Jeffery and Rotter 2016:307).

Like Jeffery and Rotter’s Chagossian interlocutors, Seychellois with herbal knowledge did not “conceive of plants principally as material resources with particular

⁴⁹ *Plectranthus amboinicus*, known as ‘Mexican mint.’

physical and phytochemical properties which are utilized by people for practical purposes,” (2016:260) but as living things with which and through which people had relationships. In general, in Seychelles medicine and food were treated as overlapping categories that produced bodily health: for example, coconut products, like medicine, were cleansing and renewing, and many people told me that coconut oil could (through being applied to the outside of the body, as well as ingested) prevent cancer. “Our traditional food” was a category that was recognised as adjacent to medicine, even if it included fried foods, processed items (like spam and corned beef) or saturated fats. As a global health ‘5 a day’ discourse has spread to the islands, local fruit in Seychelles has been increasingly revalued as symbolic of the islands’ abundance, and presented to tourists as luxurious. Amongst the diaspora, connection to the islands was cultivated through particular forms of consumption (see Passages) and could be gained or lost. While the ability to consume large amounts of alcohol and eat spicy food were characteristics identified as particularly Creole and located “in the blood,” the role that blood played in responding to foods and medicines was not automatically underpinned by an essentialised inner identity; it was necessary to maintain contact with the materialities of *kreolite*.

These materialities were ever-shifting. Elements of this were positive: herbal medicine was extended through transnational networks of exchange that introduced new plant knowledge (Matatiken, et al. 2011:68) and ensured its circulation across borders (Jeffery and Rotter 2016:301-2). But there were negative aspects too, as the realities of climate change and property development transformed the landscape. Ferdinand believed that in Seychelles, the earth produced everything that people needed, but pointed out that this was changing. He speculated that in twenty-five years, “people will die sitting down” because food will be so scarce, and that this process will be rapid in small countries like Seychelles. Across the river, the cinnamon trees had been felled in large numbers, so that

the sun dried out the earth and caused drought. The capacity for regeneration did not negate the inevitability of death, whether for plants, people or the planet.



Figure 32. (left): transplanted gros bom cutting. Figure 33. (right): white chillies. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016)

Knowledge of good and evil

This section follows from the idea of death as natural and desirable, to consider the place of harm within healing. For Ferdinand, it was important that *grigri* was harmful and immoral, in contrast to herbal medicine, and yet there was space for the harmful and immoral within the ideally productive garden. He located the distinction between an herbalist and a witch in the extent to which their knowledge was textual; nonetheless, herbal knowledge was increasingly being decanted into textual forms.

Ferdinand was clear that he was an herbalist, not a *bonnonm dibwa* or a *sorsye* (witch).

*Mon herbalis mon, mon pa egalite ek sa
bann dimoun - e bann zot kontan pour ed
mon pare mon ase - pas ke later labitid,
mon affer i byen, napa mal.*

I’m a herbalist, I’m not the same as those
people – people like to help me prepare
my cuttings – because the land, my
practice, my business is good, not bad.

When he had first cleared the land and planted his garden, he had been an object of suspicion and had even been searched by police hoping to find evidence of black magic. He was critical of the herbalists' association, founded by René's SPPF in the early 1980s, because of its failure to distinguish between these categories: "*Herbalis pa sorsye, bonnonm dibwa pa sorsye, sorsye i sorsye!*" (Herbalist isn't witch, *bonnonm dibwa* isn't witch, witch is witch!). The other terms had clear negative and destructive overtones, which he repudiated; he was also critical of what he called "superstition," and seemed more unimpressed by *grigri* than condemnatory of it. At the same time, even an organization that failed to "disentangle" these roles was better than no organization at all. He recalled an occasion when he had been interviewed for a Mauritian radio station in which the host kept referring to him as a *bonnonm dibwa* because there was no equivalent category of *herbalis*, nor any official body to regulate such things.

He was clear about what distinguished herbalists from mere practitioners of *grigri*:

Ferdinand:	<i>Zapel sorsye, ti sorsye dan bannla rod tou liv sosyer liv pti albert, liv fwa mason, liv mazik...</i>	Those called witches, those witches need all those witch books, Petit Albert books ⁵⁰ , Freemason books, magic books...
Egla:		Sorcery, divination...

His own medicinal knowledge was not primarily textual. Though he subscribed to professional standards that required him to keep his own records, and has contributed to scholarly efforts to systematize herbal medicinal knowledge in the region (Matatiken, et al. 2011:70), he does not require books in order to do his work. It seemed that the rigidity of

⁵⁰ The *Petit Albert* is an 18th century grimoire.

textual knowledge troubled him. He considered *grigri* to have been spread by organised religion,⁵¹ the setting out of laws governing human behaviour, and the creation of boundaries between good and evil. Perhaps in the past, he said, people had sinned, but they had been unaware that they were sinning. Organized religion was enforced by priests who themselves behaved badly, whilst expecting laypeople to be moral.

“Bondye ki dormi,” he said. God who sleeps. “God of water, God of drought.”

There were many Gods but still one priest, one bishop, one Pope, and this enabled people to pretend that there was only one God.

Egla explained, “He doesn't believe that the God he worships is the one that incites people to go to war and to kill one another and to rape others and whatnot – he doesn't believe he's worshipping the same God as them.”

Egla:	There is nothing bad in the earth - everybody's doing something good. It might not please you, but he is going to please himself.
Ferdinand: <i>I annan mal, i annan bon, bon, Bondye. Mal, malfer, malfezans, satan. Me pou satan i bon.</i>	There is bad, there is good, good, God. Bad, culprit, evil-doing, Satan. But for Satan, it's good.
E:	But it for Satan it is good. It's his desire that he is accomplishing.

This idea of multiplicity recurred throughout the conversation, in reference to different aspects of the garden and the individual plants. *Latizann*, the tisane made from a blend of herbs, could clean, renew, regenerate, reinvigorate; while the A4 sheets recorded recipes, the mixtures themselves were ones that Ferdinand tested constantly, tweaking the

⁵¹ A view shared by other Seychellois and corroborated by history – see Taylor (2005:425).

amounts and ratios. The 182 species of plant grown on the property, whether grass-like herbs, shrubs or trees, had to be arranged spatially in the right mixture, so that they enriched the soil for one another rather than depleting it. Herbs, in particular, had to be grown carefully so as not to “kill off everything.” Plants themselves might have inherently mixed nature:

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| Egla: | | (to me) Did you see over there <i>bwa bouke</i> ? This is the one with the little, the yellow – |
| Ferdinand: | <i>Kat kouleur -</i> | Four colours – |
| E: | | Yes, four different colours the flowers, each colour has significance. Because you have the red ones, the blue ones, and the white ones and the yellow ones I think – |
| F: | <i>Sak kouleur dan en zour dan en semen - ozordi blan-gri -</i> | Those colours are of the days of the week – today, light-brown – |
| E: | | He has a wealth of knowledge, my father. |

For a few minutes there was a synesthetic back-and-forth between father and daughter: the colours of the flowers, corresponding days of the week, and the associations of each day, astrological signs, Greco-Roman deities, personal qualities associated with all of these things. Plants were not only mixed in their forms, but conjured up a mixture of associations for Ferdinand – these associations were roughly, though not exactly, harmonious with their medicinal purposes.



Figure 34. (top): packaged pieces of wood. Figure 35. (bottom): leaves and wood drying. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).



Figure 36. (top): dried wood, with *latizann* recipes. Figure 37. (bottom): labelled wood and leaves. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

No plant was wholly good or wholly bad. The beneficial properties of plants were not opposed to their potentially harmful qualities; medicines could in fact be effective precisely because they were to some extent harmful. *Rasin napoleon*,⁵² useful for treating fibrosis, had to be treated with care because it was an abortifacient. *Bonvolonte*⁵³ aided sleep, but

⁵² Latin name: *flemingia strobilifera*.

⁵³ While I could find no further information about this plant, the name translates to ‘goodwill.’

could not be kept in the house because it would encourage torpor. He described this latter species as “miraculous”, “a protector”: if you were accused of a crime, you could boil a tisane and bathe in the water, and the plant would remove all suspicion from you.

“But we have to be careful with this one,” Eglá laughed. “Sometimes the one who comes to ask you for it is really guilty, and they should be punished.”

*

Ferdinand’s knowledge is increasingly considered part of intangible cultural heritage in Seychelles. While the concept of ICH was intended to focus safeguarding efforts on processual aspects of cultural expression, this is complicated by the recognition that the tangible and intangible are “intimately conjoined” (Kurin 2004:70). Traditional medicinal knowledge is a case in point: Ferdinand’s knowledge was not dematerialised, but existed in relation to the garden and plants themselves, in his body and in the bodies of his patients. Attempts to fix the seeming ephemerality of this knowledge were thus another kind of material transformation: into textual and classificatory forms. The medicinal garden is a site where intimacies (physical, familial, political) intersect.

Growth is a form of “material accumulation” (Hallam and Ingold 2016:2), the garden an accretion of material knowledge. Ferdinand’s garden and Ferdinand’s knowledge co-constituted each other in fundamentally material ways. Mixtures of plants – in the spatial layout of the garden, and in the form of *latizann* – were made on the basis of his experience and experimentation. It was not that the garden was a space where boundaries ceased to exist, or where harm was an impossibility, but that Ferdinand had a particularly developed sense of proportion. He had developed this through years of learning, working and growing. Significantly, this process was one by which the garden shaped his knowledge, just as he shaped it – a process of mutual cultivation (Hallam and

Ingold 2016:3). His herbal knowledge was produced in the interaction of plants and their characteristics, his body, and the bodies of those who sought cures from him. It was thus predicated on the environmental conditions that allowed things to grow in Seychelles; which he, like other interlocutors, saw as vulnerable to climate change, soil erosion and drought. Despite the emphasis on continuity that has been made in efforts to conserve what has been termed “natural heritage” (Lowenthal 2005:87), it is important that such landscapes and systems are in constant flux. Growing landscapes encompass the dead and decaying matter necessary to support new life (Thomson 2012:28) and are influenced by the movement of human and non-human bodies, which have both intentional and accidental consequences (Ellen and Platten 2011:564). In their complexity, they undermine the idea of agency as a determining factor in the distinction between animate and inanimate, nature and art.

This material accretion also encompasses the political. Gardens can act as sites of banal nationalism, where the nation is materialised and experienced sensorially (Tilley 2008); in the case of the medicinal garden, it is also ingested. The biogeography of Seychelles is heavily influenced by the experience of the plantation, through seeds and plant species that were transported for cultivation as well as through the plant knowledge of those compelled to cultivate them. Jeffery and Rotter have followed historical paths of displacement and dispersal across the Indian Ocean and to the U.K., understanding Chagossian plant knowledge within the context of modern transnational relationships informed by “forced displacement from their homeland, a loss of tangible heritage, and disrupted social ties” (2016:297). Ferdinand’s garden, though it is rooted in place in Seychelles, is likewise part of present-day transnational relationships that draw on longer histories.

The discourses that associate both ‘wild’ spaces and secret “plots” (Roane 2019:23) with individualistic masculinity (see Chapter 5) have worked to produce medicinal gardens and knowledge of herbal plants as an important aspect of Seychellois Afro-Creole identity for the state. In asking that they be recognised as such by international bodies like UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture (as well as NGOs like Seychelles Heritage Foundation) draw on a broader global framework that often demands that “knowledge” is condensed into documentary forms that are within the remit of a heritage “middle management” (Beardslee 2016:89). This process of safeguarding requires the translation of embodied knowledge into new (often textual) forms: inventories, digital media, and discourses adjacent to Intellectual Property (Brown 2005:48, 51): “metacultural” outcomes distinct from the phenomena they aim to encapsulate (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:58). Furthermore, these outcomes are underwritten by a certain genealogical and orthographic reasoning, a simplified “tracing” of the “map” of how medicines are actually used (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:12).

This is somewhat at odds with the way that medicinal knowledge is understood by practitioners, for whom transmission of herbal knowledge from the practitioner to their child had been the norm (Matatiken, et al. 2011:69). Ferdinand recognised the usefulness of organizations and associations, whilst retaining a critical distance from them. The state, the Church, and practitioners of *grigri* had in common a reliance on texts that was untrustworthy, either because it was too permissive or because it was falsely rigid, and therefore encouraged hypocrisy. Nonetheless, he was happy to collaborate with academic authors on ethnobotanical research (Matatiken, et al. 2011), permit visitors to the islands to interview him (Hagan 2016), engage with schoolchildren and Heritage Clubs, and participate in events like the annual Traditional Medicine Day. Part of this willingness stemmed from the kind of afterlife this textual knowledge would have – it would, as “living

cultural heritage,” played an active role in sociality, healing, and the maintenance of connections between places and people (Jeffery and Rotter 2016:300).



Figure 38. (left) and figure 39. (right): SHF Heritage Clubs learning to grow medicinal plants. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

But the impetus for engaging with the state also came from Eglá. Though she was invested in her father’s knowledge on a personal level, learning as much as she could from him in order to practice it herself (both in her daily life, and for the sake of assisting friends and relatives), she recognised that this knowledge had wider value. A member of the NYS generation, as well as a Seychellois who had lived abroad, she had a sense of a global, human heritage. She was often ‘European’ in her thinking – prompt and meticulous in a way that was stereotyped as characteristic of the diaspora. Yet, like my other interlocutors, she was critical of ‘Western’ and ‘modern’ mores and the role that they played in the socialisation of children. Through her work at SHF, her father’s knowledge was not simply absorbed into a larger pattern of the variation of human culture, but was actively transmitted to a new generation. These children lived in new homes where, though they might have parents who used herbal remedies (Matatiken, et al. 2011:68-9), it was increasingly likely that there would not be sufficient space or resources to cultivate their own medicinal plants. Through SHF and the work of government ministries, children were given access to common gardens at Domain Val des Pres and at their schools, as well as

contact with practitioners. Ferdinand's knowledge, incorporated into this framework, also cut across scales of intimacy. Through traditional medicine, the interplay between state *kreolite* and familial affection became evident.

Moutya

There are points of convergence between how traditional medicine and *moutya* are valued by the state, but there are also important differences. My encounters with *moutya* were wide-ranging, and accordingly I will draw on several examples to explore the regenerative power of *moutya* as arising from its materials, relationship to place, and physical and metaphysical dimensions. First, I must emphasise that *moutya* was part of the public consciousness, even if it was not frequently performed in public places. Even prior to officially beginning fieldwork, on a family beach trip, a middle-aged relative produced a *djembe* (though not a *tanbour moutya*) and played a few ribald songs. Everyone, especially the women in the group, sang along and danced ecstatically; one of my light-skinned male relatives looked them over and exclaimed, "They are Africans!" On another occasion, after the main parade at Carnaval 2016, I sat on a bench at the Old Playground (in Pier Ward) while a group of tipsy revellers played a faux-*moutya* on a set of picnic tableware: the group beating plastic plates that they held aloft; one man enthusiastically playing a plastic cup like a triangle. While these performances cannot be considered in any way authentic, they suggested to me that *moutya* was part of the public imagination.

But it was clear that *moutya* was a special object of interest to the Ministry of Culture and other heritage practitioners, as they were seeking its recognition by UNESCO – a process that is still ongoing. I attended a week-long workshop on making a *moutya* drum; spoke at length to Patrick Victor (who organised a subsequent workshop) and Jimmy Savy

about attempts to “revive” the genre; and attended performances that ranged from upscale and exclusive (at Berjaya Hotel and other resorts) to informal and open (at the weekly Bazar Labrin on Beau Vallon beach). The significant level of academic and historical interest in *moutya* meant that there were also events that explicitly situated it within the framework of intangible cultural heritage. Through these events, I became familiar with the characteristics that distinguished *moutya* as a genre; the idea that it was not only traditional but “medicinal”, spiritually and emotionally renewing. But *moutya* was also in flux, undergoing a translation from its traditional context into a modern one, in which it was supposed to have the capacity to revive and renew the nation. In this process of translation, there was considerable anxiety that the qualities that made *moutya* regenerative at a small scale would be lost. Above all, there was a sense that this loss had already happened – many interlocutors, across different contexts, remarked that what I was witnessing was not “real *moutya*,” though they did so coyly and without further elaboration.

The literature of Indian Ocean Afro-Creole forms has tended to focus on *sega*, a genre that overlaps *moutya* but which has dwindled in importance to state *kreolite* over the past decade. Both genres are drum-based and polyrhythmic, derived from the experience of slavery, with lyrics that often focus on romantic and financial hardship. *Sega* has been analysed in terms of its role within an Afro-Creole world that spans the globe (Jeffery 2010a); as memory-work that engages the slave past (Alpers 2000) and connects it to contemporary struggle (Pyndiah 2016); and as voice-work that evidences the everyday lives of women (Boswell 2017).

Within Seychelles, academic engagements with *moutya* have tended use linguistic and historical analytical frameworks (Choppy 2006). A notable exception to both

tendencies is recent work by Parent (2018) that, through a detailed ethnomusicological approach, has considered the relationship of an elusive “authentic” *moutya* to the diversity of present-day performance norms. My analysis similarly considers this ideal *moutya* against a reality that interlocutors characterised as imperfect, but I place this in the context of the other Creole objects discussed throughout this thesis. I argue that changes in *moutya* can be understood as changing engagements with materials, and that this has ramifications for understanding the nature of the spaces in which it has been performed.

Materials

Though the state has advocated for *moutya* to be recognised as intangible cultural heritage, the *tanbour moutya* as an object is an essential element of the genre. The material properties of the drum were important for the sound of the music and the form of the dance, so much so that a shift from traditional natural materials to synthetic ones was part of a shift in the nature of *moutya* performances.

I first encountered the importance of materials at the *moutya* drum workshop organised by the Ministry of Culture, where Jude Ernesta planned to teach participants how to construct a *tanbour moutya* from prepared goatskin and a round wooden frame. The drums were traditionally present in three sizes – *manman* (mummy), *papa* (daddy) and *pti* (little) – and might be accompanied by a *djembe*, as well as shakers and other small percussive instruments. The use of a goatskin (*peau cabri*) was treated as central to the construction of an authentically traditional drum. This choice of material was once partly a pragmatic choice, as during the 19th and 20th centuries goats were commonly kept by households; though the group also discussed the fact that it would have been possible to use *peau bef* (cowhide) instead, and the justification for using goat was an aesthetic one.

Peau cabri was used because of the tone it produced, though this tone could only be achieved once the drum had been warmed by the fire for some time. The skin was shaved with a narrow blade, and then soaked for several hours in water in order to make it stretchy.



Figure 40. (top): staging a shot with the Ministry photographer, Johnny Volcere. Figure 41. (bottom): preparing the peau cabri. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

The frame was a departure from tradition, as it was made from marine plywood rather than the branch of a mangrove tree. Like goatskin, mangrove branches would once have been an accessible material – there are several large mangrove swamps fringing the island of Mahé. However, the use of coastal land for the development of resorts, the “endangered” status of modern mangrove swamps, and the increased accessibility of other kinds of materials have combined to make plywood a more logical choice. Unlike the goatskin, the material of the frame was not considered central to the kind of sound produced. The method in either case was the same: the wood had to be soaked for several hours in order to make it pliable and allow the artisan to bend it into a hoop. The marine plywood broke several times despite their efforts to bend it carefully and Jude contended that even modern plywood was inferior in comparison to the kind he had used in the past. The repeated setbacks meant that the workshop was disrupted several times, as there was nothing to do but wait for the plywood to soak and hope that it would bend; concerned that part of the problem was the circumference of the oil drum that the wood was bent around, the artisans suggested that we drive to La Bastille (formerly home to the National Heritage Division) and try to find their original frame. This attempt was unsuccessful, and in desperation the artisans found a stone ornament of roughly the right circumference and clamped the soaked plywood around it. I remarked that Jude’s expertise was clear from the fact that he could improvise a solution. Jude only looked at me balefully and continued tightening the clamps.



Figure 42. top: the marine plywood is shaped around a metal drum. Figure 43 (bottom): "*I'n kas-e!*" (It's broken!) – removing the clamps to find that the plywood is brittle. Photographs by Mairi O'Gorman (2016).



Figure 44 (top): attempting to find a suitable frame at La Bastille. Figure 45 (bottom): the second attempt at shaping plywood. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

Eventually a few frames could be assembled. The skin was first stretched over these and wound tightly with cord in order to stretch it, before being nailed to the frame. The finished drums were declared adequate by the two men, who were nonetheless despondent about how long the process had taken; they would have, once heated, the right tone. Despite the level of improvisation that had gone into their construction, the

drums were rendered authentic by the knowledge of the two artisans who had created them, and the appropriateness of the materials. Indeed, it was knowledge of the delicacy of the materials and the successive stages of treatment that they would have to pass through that constructed Jude *as* an expert (as irksome as it was for this expertise to have to be deployed).



Figure 46. (top): soaked *peau cabri*. Figure 47. (bottom): fitting the *peau cabri* to the frame.
Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

The finicky nature of the *peau cabri* was widely acknowledged, and contrasted by interlocutors with the simpler synthetic drum. Synthetic drums were tuned by manually tightening the man-made 'skin' with a screw, and were preferred for stage performances because they did not have to go through a lengthy tuning process that involved the construction of an appropriate fire. Patrick Victor nonetheless remarked that the synthetic drum had an almost wholly negative impact on traditional music by allowing its translation into a more formalised space – a contention that perhaps seems extreme, until one considers the extremity of the shift in *moutya* performance spaces that has occurred over the past four decades.

Comparison with Parent's account is instructive here; during her fieldwork between 2012 and 2014, she scarcely saw a *tanbour moutya* in real life. Her Seychellois informants linked the modern-day scarcity of goatskin to a decline in the production of drums, suggesting that this had led to an overall decline in the performance of *moutya* (2018:308). In contrast, my fieldwork in 2016 was characterised by the omnipresence of the drum as an object, and workshops that revolved around its production, yet the kinds of performance I witnessed were similar (as will be explored further in the next section). While it would not be productive to construct a straightforward causal relationship between the form and function of the *tanbour moutya*, it is nonetheless significant that the change in materials coincided with a movement onto the stage, and into indoor spaces which are gradually becoming the typical backdrop for performances.

Place

This movement indoors disrupted an existing association between *moutya* and outdoor, often secret, places, in favour of its emplacement within a nation. This historical secrecy is

a reflection of the genre's origins in slavery; the shift towards more public forms is a reflection of an emphasis on the form of the genre over its regenerative capacities at an individual level.

Moutya could be played anywhere, but it properly belonged to wild and peripheral spaces. *Sega-moutya* songs⁵⁴ by artists like Jean-Marc Volcy and Fek Arive were played at London *bal Seselwa*, but my companions were always clear that “real” *moutya* took place *danbwa* or on remote beaches in the dead of night, around a fire, amongst “Africans.” The popular image was the same in Seychelles – *moutya* did not take place on a stage or indoors, but outside on the earth (*later*) with bare feet. “If there was a real *moutya* tonight, you could go,” Patrick Victor told me, when we met at his studio. Real *moutya* was always at a remove, temporally and spatially.

Moutya as it was actually performed was often displayed to tourists in spaces that were accessible to them, but which aimed to approximate the traditional setting. The weekly market at Bazar Labrin, Beau Vallon, hosted a *moutya* group who performed around a fire in the central area, encouraging tourists to dance and drink *kalou* (palm toddy). During my fieldwork, a luxurious *bal moutya* was held by SEYMAS at the Berjaya resort; hotel musicians often worked *moutya* into a set, whilst including other genres. The focus in such settings was on teaching tourists to enjoy an authentically Seychellois genre, but the performances themselves fell short of authenticity for this reason. Even at events like the *bal moutya* at Au Cap, which took place outdoors near the sea, began at evening and lasted well into the night, interlocutors lamented that the setting was not authentic. Within my group of friends that evening, a young Latin American NGO worker opined that *moutya* could not be central to being Seychellois, or it would be danced in nightclubs and at parties;

⁵⁴ Mingling elements of *moutya* with *sega* in a way that made the former more accessible within a respectable party setting.

the Seychellois present, normally so careful to avoid causing offense to foreigners, laughed derisively at this.

The association between *moutya* and wild places derives partly from its origins in slave practices and the role that it played within plantation life. Traditional genres in Seychelles generally derive from the creolizing experience of the plantation – *kanmtole* and *kontredans*, *vals* and *kotis* all use steps from the European tradition, adapting them to Seychellois rhythms, instrumentation and tastes. They represent a consciously top-down aesthetic tradition; sometimes danced barefoot, but on the polished wooden floor of a house or hall.

Sega and *moutya*, in contrast, were danced barefoot in outdoor environs. *Sega*, which arose in Mauritius as well as Seychelles, derives its name from “*tschiega*”, a word that simply means “dance” (McAteer 1991:258), and draws more obviously on the aesthetics and movements that enslaved Africans brought with them to the islands. *Moutya* is said to be derived from a Bantu word, “*mutcira*,” (Mahoune 2015) though Parent has speculated that this etymology may be fictive or relate to an archaic word no longer in use (2018:212). It is worth noting that there are other genres closely associated with Seychellois African heritage – *madilo*, a genre from the Inner Island of La Digue; *tinge*, the ‘Seychellois capoeira’, with its fluid martial moves; and *sokwe*, traced to the “elephant dance” witnessed by General Gordon, in which several young men pantomimed the hunting of an elephant. The latter is mentioned by the Benedicts, while *moutya* does not appear in their writing at all (1982:146), yet it is not the case that *moutya* did not exist at the time that they wrote, or that it is a recently invented tradition. My mother recalls witnessing a midnight *moutya* during this era, near the cemetery in Mont Fleuri.

The other genres mentioned above are distinguished from *moutya* by the fact that they were performed somewhat publicly, even during the era of slavery (when they were likely part of performances witnessed and encouraged by the planters (Pyndiah 2016:494)). *Moutya* was defined and constituted by its secrecy and illicitness. *Sega* has tended to predominate in academic accounts, perhaps because in its melding of African polyrhythms with European folk melodies and its prevalence throughout the Indian Ocean, it appears prototypic in relation to other genres (Alpers 2000:92). It also should not be understated that such points of commonality with other Indian Ocean islands (Jeffery 2010a:430) were, until recently, valued over uniqueness.

“But I think,” Achille Luc (musician and artist) told me, “*sega* is not really African. You can see that a lot of the dancing is a bit Indian-y.” We were meeting within the confines of the National Cultural Centre, in the presence of Ministry employees who visibly stiffened at this remark. But it was undeniable that the focus within cultural heritage had shifted away from *sega*, which was a tradition shared with Mauritians (hence, perhaps, “a bit Indian-y”) towards *moutya*.

Luc acknowledged this. “Now *moutya* – *moutya* is its own thing.”

The emplacement of *moutya* in remote and secret places thus includes the Seychelles islands themselves. During Seychelles Heritage Foundation’s summer activities, a *moutya* band taught the assembled schoolchildren about the genre, while the most senior member told them (his tone grave), “This is our heritage – not rap, not ragga, reggae. *Moutya*.” It was not only Mahé; as Patrick Victor told me, “Each island has its own magic.” The island of La Digue was part of a strong musical tradition, with a reputation for maintaining old African ways of drumming and singing, and he frequently enlisted performers from there in his own projects (including the renowned David Philoe). In

making *moutya* quintessentially Seychellois, interlocutors not only drew a direct line to a remembered and imagined Africa. They also reconstructed the seeming global peripherality and marginality of Seychelles itself as a productive wildness, an authenticity (Parent 2018:24).

Patrick Victor has drawn much public attention to the fact that *moutya* was illegal under the colonial government, and that the statute prohibiting the playing of drums within range of Victoria has never been repealed. Outdoor performance not only allowed for the building of a fire that could warm the drums and function as a focal point for dancing, but was also necessary in order to preserve an illicit practice. *Moutya* provided a space in which slaves could sing bittersweet, sarcastic songs that maligned their masters, dance sexually, and enact a form of freedom; its spatial marginalization was a reflection of its subversive nature. Parent points out that though the image of authentic *moutya* is now associated with dancing on sand on the shore, original performances would have taken place deep in the woods, *danbwa*, for secrecy's sake (2018:216). Though *moutya* was never fully invisible to the ruling classes, the fact of its being banned⁵⁵ attests to an ongoing elite awareness of and engagement with it.

Importantly, present-day attempts by Victor and others to revive the genre focus less on the repeal of this law and more on the formalization of the genre. A spatial shift has accompanied this too. If *moutya* has persisted haphazardly in a variety of settings, both in London and in Seychelles, the attempt to gain official recognition of its importance has prompted a movement into workshops, government buildings, universities, and other institutional settings. *Moutya* has moved through several spaces: *danbwa*, at the

⁵⁵ See also the concern shown by Malavois regarding the land concession held by the free Malagasy woman Vola-Ma-Effa (Chapter 2), whose property was close to the town and was described as being the site of both debauchorous dancing and witchcraft practices.

periphery; the stage and the luxury hotel, as part of the tourist economy; and the institutional setting.

The latter is distinct from the others because the level of ribaldry attributed to ‘authentic’ *moutya* is seldom possible in this kind of setting (while it may be intermittently so in the presence of tourists). Workshops and lectures focused on the technical, whether the mechanics of producing a drum or the ways that *moutya* lyrics utilised Kreol language features. Their aim was not to create the euphoric, transcendental experience of participating in *moutya*, but to impart the techniques necessary for the reproduction of this experience. What occurs in a workshop is not, and cannot be, “real” *moutya* – in part, because it is devoid of the necessary physicality.

Physical

The physicality of *moutya* is related to the polyrhythmic quality of its musical structure, which is reflected in the movement of dancers’ bodies. Being able to dance in this way was conceptualised as uniquely Seychellois, though involving *moutya* in tourism meant attempting to teach tourists the movement too.

Interlocutors’ statements about ‘authentic’ *moutya* were often vague. I touched on the genre when presenting my work at the NCC in October 2017. Marilyn, an attendee who had lived in Australia, said, “It’s all well and good to talk about the revival of *moutya*, but what’s happening nowadays is not like the *moutya* I remember, and I’m sure other people would agree with me. The *moutya* I remember would be considered really quite shocking in comparison.”

Though interlocutors during my main period of fieldwork had also been coy, I knew that what was usually being referenced was the physicality of *moutya* dancing. Footwork was central; the movements of the rest of the body flowed from the feet upwards. Footwork is syncopated (one foot keeping time to the *pile*, the main beat,⁵⁶ while the other moves separately); a fluid motion of the hips, buttocks and lumbar region; for women, the upper body remains almost still. Men may move their arms in a ‘blocking’ motion around a female dance partner. The focus on the movement of the hips (which, at *bal Seselwa*, British attendees often translated into a disjointed waggling of the backside) is part of the ‘African’ character of *sega* and *moutya* and is absent from more “European” forms like *vals* and *kontredans*.

Sega often involves a level of play with sexuality and gender, whether in the form of an emphasis on the female body, close dancing between partners, or flirtation between men and women dancing apart. Men, women and audience make eye contact, but through glances, rarely in a sustained fashion – instead, a kind of generalised gaze settles over everyone. In both *sega* and *moutya*, women are often physically centred, but *sega* is characterised by the way that women hold the hems of their full skirts widely, fanning them out. Both dances hinge on the differentiation of male and female roles (Parent 2018:358) and though women can dance the male part, the opposite is unheard of. The movements of both dances share a common genealogy with the wining, body-rolling and twerking that takes place in nightclubs to dancehall reggae and pop, but are formally otherwise unlike them: the tempo of Seychellois *sega* is slower than that of other Indian Ocean nations (Jeffery 2010a:430), while the tempo of *moutya* is slower still.

⁵⁶ It is this *pile* referenced in Ras Ricky’s song in Chapter 5, *Lazenes*.

One distinction between *moutya* and *sega* in the popular imagination is the idea that this play with sexuality has the potential to develop into close and sustained physical contact, the simulation of sex, or perhaps sex itself. The 1977 film *Goodbye Emmanuelle*, epitomising the early tourist depiction of Seychelles as a libertine paradise, describes *moutya* as a dangerous, trancelike dance which “ends in orgy.” This cannot be treated as a statement of fact. It was an image carefully composed to sell both the film and the islands, for it was just this transcendental eroticism that had drawn the lead characters to Seychelles and, at the time, it was hoped that it would draw wealthy tourists too. The nature of tourism in Seychelles has changed sufficiently that this is no longer the kind of image that Seychellois use to popularise the islands, and sex has been enfolded into a more general sense of a Seychellois Creole *joie de vivre*. However, it is not an idea that only exists in the minds of tourists and outsiders. While none of my interlocutors spoke of their own engagement with *moutya* in these terms, several people talked about witnessing highly sexualised *moutya* dancing that involved close physical contact. This was both part of the appeal of *moutya* and a source of anxiety and circumspection surrounding it.



Figure 48. SEYMAS *bal moutya*, Berjaya hotel, Mahé. Photograph by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

While at the upscale performances in hotels and resorts, there was flirtatious dancing between male and female performers, this entailed a degree of distance. Men danced low to the ground, teasingly ‘blocking’ women, who stamped and shook their skirts. Despite the fact that eroticism was part of these performances, the comfort of tourists was acknowledged through a careful fine-tuning of physical proximity, eye contact, and a smiling ‘family friendly’ demeanour on the part of the dancers. Teaching tourists to dance *moutya* was often incorporated into the performance, and much of this teaching focused on proper movement of the hips. Through my position as observer-participant, I often took part in this (just as I joined in with any and all dancing, whenever possible), in a way that my interlocutors found droll. As opposed to the unqualified praise that tourists received from the dancers, my interlocutors remarked (with visible surprise), “You’re not too bad,” or “You have a good movement.” One man, either unaware of all the practice that went into my mediocre performance, or actively making fun of it, told me, “You see, it’s in your blood.”



Figure 49. (left) and figure 50. (right): Keven Valentin’s band perform, with dancers, at Constance Ephelia (St Anne island). Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

While I feel it is important to differentiate between a reading of *moutya* as primarily sexual, and *moutya* as a performance in which sexuality is marshalled as part of a vocabulary of bodily gestures and dispositions, there is a tension here. If much of this thesis has been about the production of categories, and the way that everyday experience

departs from them, the distinction between eroticised dancing, simulated sex, and sex itself seem especially porous. Rather than attempt to fix boundaries between these, what I wish to highlight here is the extent to which the porousness of categories was potentially a source of pleasure and anxiety for interlocutors. Both sexualised lyrics and dancing were downplayed at events where tourists were the primary audience – instead, there was the necessity of achieving a balance between expressing sexuality and restraining it, thereby rendering it respectable for public performance.



Figure 51 (left) and figure 52. (right): late-night *moutya* at Au Cap. Photographs by Mairi O’Gorman (2016).

At events that had a substantial local audience, such as the Bazar Labrin performances, and the dances at Lenstiti Kreol and Au Cap, this balance was different than it was when the audience was made up of wealthy white foreigners. At the latter two events, amongst an almost wholly Seychellois crowd, the dancing was uninhibited and ribald. There was no dance troupe performing for an audience (though it is important that the performance was not authentic, as it took place on a stage), only a gathering of like-minded people of all ages. Women in particular seemed to relish the opportunity to dance freely.

The Bazar Labrin performance that I witnessed differed slightly in tone. Despite the presence of tourists, and the effort to teach them moves, the dancing was not so carefully monitored as in other tourist settings. Perhaps because the performance took place at night, with bare feet, on the sand, around a fire, there was less emphasis on respectability. The band, seated on crates and boxes, played while two men and a woman danced. Though there was only one woman, she was the focal point of everything that went on around her. The two men danced at a distance from her, watching her movements; they took it in turns to dance close to her, sometimes locked in place with her at the pelvis. The men turned to the crowd, taking the hands of tourist women and trying to engage them, when suddenly a large group of young people emerged from the darkness. From their haircuts and the style of their clothes, it was obvious that they too were tourists; as they were all of an age, they gave the impression of being from a youth group or an NGO. They began to swirl around the fire in a circle, stamping their feet (foot by foot, staccato, rhythm uniform) and shaking their bottoms. They waved their arms and, ululated and whooped. The Seychellois stood aside, the men with pasted-on smiles, the woman scowling. When they had finished this display, everyone clapped. But the mood had been broken. The band stopped making eye contact with the tourists, and the dancers danced among themselves, no longer inviting anyone to join.

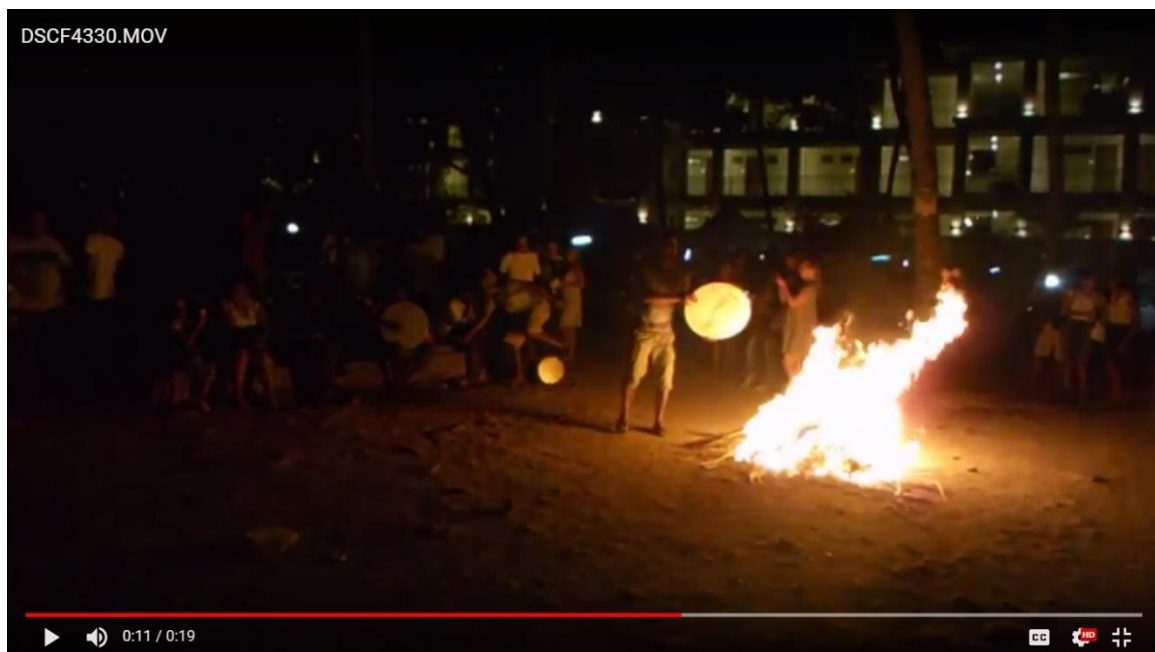


Figure 53 (top): warming the drum at Bazar Labrin. Figure 54 (bottom): dancing. Stills from footage by William O’Gorman (2017), reproduced with permission.

The tourists’ performance was a pastiche, an imitation that veered (albeit good-naturedly) into burlesque. Despite the small details of movement and rhythm (if the hips are

important, this importance extends to and from the movement of the feet) that distinguished Seychellois dances, they performed a caricature that relied on an obviously racialized component (Taussig 2018:69). Recognising the romantic portrayal of authenticity that was taking place in the *moutya*, they performed a kind of generic ‘tribal ritual,’ a bowdlerized *haka*. This was likely embarrassing to the performers – who, after all, were professionals who performed weekly, rather than having spontaneously begun an ecstatic performance – but, perhaps more importantly, it interfered with the element that interlocutors identified as most important: the “feeling.”

Metaphysical

The idea of the “feeling” constitutes *moutya* as a healing practice. This was linked by some interlocutors to the cathartic quality of the lyrics, and the historical role of this catharsis within the context of slavery. Others alluded to a connection with African spirituality. This section will argue that the construction of *moutya* as ‘medicinal’ draws on its subversive qualities; its potential to reveal sexuality, spirituality and personal animus that had been hidden. It thus occupies an uneasy position within state *kreolite*.

Several interlocutors referred to the “feeling” of *moutya*, usually in conventional terms – that *moutya* is neither a style nor a set of moves, but a feeling. While movement of the hips and pelvis was recognised as important to the genre, it was stressed that “you need to *feel* it.” At *bal Seselwa* in London, friends and relatives often described their reactions to particular rhythms in similar terms – “When I hear that beat, I just get that feeling. I have to get up and dance.” Here, as with the discussion of sexuality, there was a degree of coyness; but this seemed less about respectability than the inadequacy of verbal description.

Alice Mondon, an experienced, semi-retired dancer who works for her local District Authority, was the most forthcoming (though she was not speaking solely in reference to *moutya*). She was familiar with many styles of traditional dance, and particular enjoyed *kanmtole* (a genre with obvious antecedents in European folk dancing), but what she valued most about all forms was how they made her feel. When I told her that other performers had been critical of the distance that existed between Seychellois and present-day tourists, she was diplomatic, saying that it depended upon the mood.

“If you do it right,” she said, “tourists won’t just stand and look. They’ll get the feeling.”

I asked what the feeling was, and she became somewhat shy. “Oh,” she said, blushing. “I don’t know. It’s a feeling that – it will make you cry. It is like a pain. But if you are in it, it’s a *soft* feeling.”

This “feeling” was the most desirable outcome of *moutya*; though it was possible in the context of other kinds of dance (a point I will expand upon below), it was the aim of *moutya* as an activity that was simultaneously involuntary and purposeful. Rose (last encountered in Chapter 5) quoted to me approvingly from a song by Jean-Marc Volcy: “*Moutya i medisinal*” (*moutya* is medicinal), while Patrick Victor was even more explicit about the genre’s healing power.

Parent asserts that *moutya*, in contrast to dances like the Réunionnais *maloya*, is “secular” and has no obvious connection to spirituality (2018:212). She was not persuaded by a conversation with Victor, who was convinced that it was a ritual practice. When I spoke to Victor, in April 2016, his thoughts on the matter had not changed. While the popular representation of *moutya* often describes it as originating in a need for catharsis on

the part of enslaved Africans, Victor expressed this in stronger terms that were more metaphysical than psychological.

He described the origin of *moutya* lyrics as an “automatic” practice in which enslaved Africans were seized suddenly by the need to express feelings that were otherwise prohibited. These might be expressions of bitterness or resentment, but also of desire. He contended that *moutya* had, and still has, the power to induce a trance; the end result of this is complete regeneration, spiritually and morally. For him, there was no difference between *moutya* and other forms of healing practice— it was like herbal medicine, or like the special places he had identified around Mahé and other islands where a “natural current” could be felt when one put one’s hand on the hillside rocks.

The spatial exclusion practiced in relation to *moutya* had convinced him that it was a practice that the colonial masters feared. Historical accounts suggest that *moutya* may have been associated with *marronage*, though not necessarily directly or causally, because the plantocracy considered the playing of drums within earshot of their homes to be an act of aggression and a threat (Taylor 2005:33). But this does not preclude the existence of a spiritual component; in the context of the U.S., Roane has written of the use of funerals as a site of “plotting” in which the ritual centrality of the ancestors prompted expressions of resistance on the part of the enslaved (2019:5). African ritual uses of drums and dance for spirit possession and healing were maintained, despite slavery, across the northern Indian Ocean (Alpers 2000:91). What makes it difficult to argue for such a link in Seychelles is the absence of documentary evidence, which is directly related to the secrecy of the practice (Parent 2018:14). However, regardless of the historical fact of a link to African spirituality, it is significant that interlocutors experienced the “feeling” as an ecstatic one and linked

this to its Africanness – to its rhythms, its secrecy, and to the expression of feelings that enslaved Seychellois had not been permitted to express.

Interlocutors were thus attempting to understand the “feeling” of *moutya* as something that they themselves experienced in the present day, and that they understood their ancestors to have experienced in the past. Lyrics that poked fun at the *grann blan*, spoke of rivalries and accusations between individuals, or articulated antagonism between men and women were a source of pride in the genre – evidence of Afro-Creole resistance to the strain of everyday life within the plantation. In this context, interlocutors took for granted that sexuality was an idiom through which the idea of freedom was expressed. Writing of “wining” in the context of Trinidadian carnival in the 1980s, Miller identified crescendo as a musical feature that created a moment of climax in which “there is almost always a look of rapture, a smile as this moment is reached and passed” (1991:333). In Seychelles, there was a similar notion that the orgiastic or transcendent moment of *moutya* occurred while the drumbeat grew faster and faster and reached an apotheosis.

Miller’s analysis of sexual expression through wining as a means to “absolute freedom” depends on the idea that sexuality runs counter to more respectable values in everyday life (ibid. 335). The authentic *moutya* valorised by interlocutors was embedded in an idea of a past in which boundaries between men and women had been clear and strictly enforced (see Chapter 3). This policing of sexuality, along with other forms of politeness and moral behaviour, was typically valued as positive; only in relation to *moutya* was it treated as a constraint that necessitated subversion and resistance. In fact, modern forms that shared a common genealogy with both *moutya* and wining – in the sense of having emerged from a shared black diasporic experience of slavery – were relegated by musician interlocutors to the realm of the vulgar and the foreign. Dancehall and pop, however

ecstatic the performances in nightclubs like the Barrel and Tequila Boom, however much relief they might bring to the person dancing, could not be of use in reviving the nation. Simultaneously, the location of authentic *moutya* in an imagined past was also a way of distancing this ribaldry and disorder – a policing, not only of the present, but of the past.

As a final point, it is notable that *moutya* is a genre that draws power from secrecy, and uses secrecy to regenerative ends, precisely through an opposition to everyday sociality, hierarchy, and the usual world order. The state-led attempt to revive it and bring it into public life (which has existed since the inception of the NYS, as described in Chapter 5) therefore has to deal with a potential danger. The present-day heirs of the anti-authoritarian streak in *moutya* (Ras Ricky among them) were considered politically divisive, while *moutya* was separated from party politics, providing a focal point for activists from both of the main parties. As Emmanuel D’Offay (visual artist and culture expert) put it, “There is power in music. Just look at this *Pil Lo Li* song that is causing so much trouble.”

In order to revive the nation, the sexuality, spirituality, and bittersweet nature of *moutya* had to be minimised, its coarse elements refined through an emphasis on technique rather than transcendence. This revival was aimed at securing UNESCO recognition, with the aim of integrating the genre into cultural tourism, which meant that it had to appeal to tourists – it certainly could not, in that case, speak truth to power or expose the roots of economic exploitation. Professionalizing and formalizing *moutya* had the effect of making it accessible to young pop acts, and I was surprised to hear National Arts Council CEO Jimmy Savy remark, “Of course, now we are doing well, *moutya* has been revived...” and move the conversation on.

It surprised me that *moutya* had suddenly been resuscitated, under my nose, while I had been watching. When I asked for clarification, he was more reticent, pointing out only

that young artists sometimes incorporated it as part of their sound. While it is clear that the visibility of the genre has greatly increased even since Parents' (2018) fieldwork was carried out between 2012 and 2014, other interlocutors were more circumspect.

Patrick Victor, who was working to bring about the same revival, was grave. He felt that a real revival of *moutya* would mean that, "we have to live it. When UNESCO visit Mauritius, they see their *sega* being performed; in Réunion, you see in every village their *maloya*." He was concerned that the presence of *moutya* in workshop spaces and among a group of professionals and experts was not enough.

This was the central tension: *moutya* had to be witnessed by outsiders to be considered part of heritage; but *moutya* that could be seen by outsiders, that was respectable enough to be fit for their consumption, might not be *moutya* at all.

Earth, secrets, rebirth

This section will place the two practices together to argue that both herbal medicine and *moutya* are about material knowledge, and specifically that they draw regenerative power from earth (*later*). Rather than being premised on an understanding of place as metaphorically productive, these practices are concerned with the material properties of earth, which have ramifications for their healing qualities. As practices that transgress and play with boundaries in various ways, they are premised on arcane knowledge. The state, through its discourse of *kreolite*, seeks to scale up their regenerative power to the level of the nation. In doing so, both practices are moved into new regimes and spaces that are in some ways public, but also – I will argue – private in a way that distinguishes privacy from secrecy.

Though traditional medicine and *moutya* are distinct, they are underwritten by notions of generation and regeneration that are derived from place. *Later* means variously “land”, “earth” and “soil”; it can be used to mean “the ground,” and to connote “dirt” (albeit dirt in its place, not in the sense of being dirty). In the context of *moutya*, as in other Indian Ocean genres (Jeffery 2010b), its texture may be distinctly sandy. I would argue that since the material properties of *later* come into view through these examples, they require analysis distinct from the metaphoric discourse of “roots” (Chapter 1) that is explicitly about nationality, or the commodity relationship that produces land-as-property (Chapter 2). The latter two frameworks are overtly about place, while this is not a necessary premise of a sense of land-as-earth. However, these different meanings overlap through the ways that state *kreolite* engages with the practices in question, which is via the language of both “roots” and cultural property.

In arguing that the importance of the earth within these practices is material, rather than solely metaphorical, I must make clear what is at stake. A metaphoric reading that treats soil as a conceptual abstraction would consider its use within nativist discourse. The statements made by interlocutors about “blood” would take on greater importance, as the two concepts are often paired in Western-derived nationalist imaginaries. The most obvious example emerged in the early-20th century in the form of fascism, but such ideas persist across a variety of contexts that are perceived as less violent and chauvinistic (Malkki 1992:27). This metaphoric soil, like arborescence, naturalises the idea of territory and nation; blood answers this in a similarly metaphoric, abstracted fashion (Herzfeld 2014:116-7)

My reluctance to address either concept in these terms is not just an instance of the well-worn anthropological fear that there is a moral equivalence between minoritized

conceptions of identity (in relation to place) and fascist ones (Kuper, et al. 2003). I think this equivalence disingenuous but, for reasons that will be explored further below, do believe that the idea of the earth could potentially contribute to chauvinist tendencies within state *kreolite*. More straightforwardly, I have no ethnographic evidence to support the idea that interlocutors felt this way, or that these framings follow logically from the engagement with earth present in traditional medicine or *moutya*.

Seychellois did at times express views concerning the relative fitness of Creole people for the climate and cuisine of the islands (which might be understood in the context of the histories recounted in **Archipelago**). Particular tolerances and abilities were located in the blood, but in a way that posited blood as highly mutable and easily influenced by the surrounding environment. Rather than a narrow claim about the regenerative capacity of the soil and plants of Seychelles in relation to the bodies of Seychellois, interlocutors made more general claims relating to a sympathetic tendency towards regeneration that existed across the natural world. This tendency existed in blood – all blood – as it did in plants and other living things, as a “vital process” (Coupaye and Pitrou 2018:3). It would be presumptuous for me to narrow the scope of this claim. Within a universal argument about human life, Seychellois blood is accorded less importance than Seychellois soil. Seychellois soil was simply particularly good, in this respect.

On this basis, I would argue away from blood, and toward the material properties of earth as constitutive of the regenerative power of traditional medicine and *moutya*. In the case of traditional medicine, the quality of the soil is central to the cultivation of plants and the germination of seeds. Ferdinand’s expertise arose partly from his ability to enrich the soil through mixing plants appropriately within his garden, just as his remedies could *don disan* (give blood) and renew the whole body. In *moutya*, the very character of

performance was likewise altered by contact with loose ground, dirt and sand. Similarly, in Chagossian *sega*, dirt – the sandy soil of coastal areas – attaches itself to dancers, slowing their rhythm beyond the limits of the Mauritian version of the same genre (Jeffery 2010b:430). The intimate quality of dancing with bare feet was part of the “feeling” that Alice Mondon described, and was part of the ideal form of variety of traditional dances. But within the house, this “feeling” came from the smoothness of motion resulting from contact with the polished wooden floor. Significantly, while the ideal house is kept free of dirt (Chapter 3), the appeal of *moutya* lies in the fact that it is danced *in* the dirt. The perceived wildness and distance from the house allows dancers a concomitant distance from respectability, especially with regard to sexuality.

The practices in this chapter thus involve a degree of play with boundaries. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that while interlocutors represented the boundary between inside and outside as meaningful, rigid, and natural, this ideal often had to be imposed on events that contradicted it. But the movement across boundaries represented in this chapter, unlike those in former chapters, is the rule rather than a deviation from the rule; in the case of medicine and *moutya*, healing and pleasure result from deliberate play with boundaries and inversion of norms. There is also an instrumental aspect to this play with boundaries – the “outside” characteristics of plants are brought into the body to heal it, while *moutya* externalises feelings that might otherwise cause stress and strife. The hidden potential of the earth is also an instance of boundary-crossing, which extends all the way from the “mechanism” of life (Coupaye and Pitrou 2018:3) into (eventually) the human body; propulsively, like Monia’s treasure bubbling up from the ground (Chapter 2).

Most significantly, both practices involve the use of the secret, arcane and interior towards material regeneration. Because both draw on the history of slavery and the

process of diaspora, they cause difficult histories to surface. However, rather than simply arguing for the cathartic aspects of this interaction between the secret and the apparent, or conceptualising these practices as revelatory, I want to consider the way that their formalisation introduces another framework: privacy. If both traditional medicine and *moutya* depend on a degree of secrecy and estrangement from everyday morality, this fact fits uneasily with state attempts to incorporate them into Creole cultural heritage. The state requires that they be transmitted and performed in educational settings, and within a tourist milieu, which means that they are formalised and sanitised. For *moutya*, its sexual and compulsive overtones are downplayed. Herbal medicine, meanwhile, is detached from occult danger. Both shed some of their African-ness, their historical specificity, being absorbed into a global marketplace of traditional products. They are displayed and performed in public spaces; outsiders are educated about them; and they become overtly respectable.

In becoming public, neither practice need lose its secret or arcane aspects – as I argued in Chapter 4, public life in Seychelles is underwritten by “public secrets” of one kind or another (Taussig 1999:5). But the fact that these public spaces are constructed around heritage means that they also move closer to the concept of *private* property, through proximity to heritage discourses rooted in this idea (Geismar 2015:78). *Moutya* and traditional medicine, in being conceptualised as “cultural heritage,” become property of the nation-state. Theoretically, this might mean that they belong to all Seychellois, but the reality more complicated, as the disputes around the term “Creole” (in Chapter 2) make clear. As in Monia’s story (Chapter 2), the state and actors associated with it are granted the power to oversee proper disposal of cultural expressions in a way that was not true when such practices were secret. Furthermore, though *moutya* and traditional medicine

are products of diaspora and displacement, they can be absorbed into emplaced ideas of nation and territory that are constructed in opposition to movement and circulation.

What is regenerative for the individual may not be for the nation, and vice-versa. State attempts to engage traditional medicine as “intangible cultural heritage” are complicated by the interrelationship of herbal remedies, *grigri*, and overtly capitalist pyramid schemes. The introduction of Intellectual Property may further complicate these relationships. The changing form of *moutya* as it is moved into new performance spaces is also cause for concern among Seychellois who prioritise its mystical and emotional dimensions.

Conclusion

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that being Creole is primarily a material relationship; but this does not mean that it is materially stable, or that it looks the same in all times and places. Rather, it is a question of being oriented towards objects and materials in ways that are informed by racialized experiences of property and aesthetics. In ending it where it began – outside, in the earth – I have sought to demonstrate that the generative power of plants and landscape within national imaginaries is material rather than simply metaphorical. Perhaps this approach is hard on metaphor, a device that does not necessarily obliterate its literal referents simply by making them stand for something else; but it is nonetheless the case that in order to understand the possibility of rebirth for Seychelles as a nation, the (sometimes uncanny) potential of materials to regenerate themselves must be taken seriously. There is nothing novel in this for my interlocutors – indeed, they understand themselves as Creole people to be especially attuned to material transformations and variations – but in academic contexts, the immaterial dimensions of metaphor have frequently assumed primacy over its literal referents in a way that is only beginning to be fully thought through. In particular, the kind of materiality that is important for my Seychellois interlocutors – the form and appearance of things, their prettiness or romance – has sometimes been treated by academia as trifling *unless* it stands for something else. Through showing how appearances emerge, and what is left out or obscured in the process of producing them, I have sought to argue that materials and the forms they take are inherently complex propositions.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I began from the material relationships established by the plantation and the way that *kreolite* has been understood both within this institution, and after it. Within a plantation-derived understanding of what it is to be Creole, trees are both

metaphorically and literally productive. Present-day inheritances from the plantation are the idea of 'roots', an idiom of Creole belonging; and property, which foregrounds the idea of belonging *to*. Like the state, property can be part of an attempt to make sense of 'roots' discourse, and to demarcate the boundaries of the Creole nation within a much larger African diaspora. Such attempts have ramifications for art practice and engagement with heritage artefacts, in delimiting suitable forms of Creole expression. But these limitations likewise have an impact on the state, as in reviving the nation through art the state makes itself vulnerable to the way that objects and materials can articulate alternate versions of history.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I explored how the materiality of roots, and conceptions of property based on the right to exclude, inform the traditional Creole house. The importance of the traditional house is bound up with its appearance: it is a deeply affective object, reconstructed and represented across a variety of times, places and media, and partaking of the same regenerative material properties as trees. Yet its 'traditional' qualities – the way that it constructs the intimate life of the ideal family – also inform everyday life in a variety of other kinds of house, and reinforce the importance of appearances more generally. A concomitant of this is the necessity of disappearances – the removal of dirty or broken things from the house, with the intention of maintaining cleanliness (materially, emotionally, and spiritually). Considering the ways in which objects and people become unacceptable or discordant elements within the house, requiring removal, allowed me to interrogate how the 'inside' of the house can be a harmful as well as a healthy place; how intimacy can have destructive dimensions; and how materials mediate these processes.

But separation from the house has also historically been part of building the nation, as the two are figured as competing sets of intimacies, and many of my interlocutors had direct experience of this via their time in the National Youth Service. In Chapters 5 and 6, I took up the question of what happens ‘outside’ the house and how, despite its dangers, the outside has been a productive and regenerative space. This is due to its association with masculinity, Africanness, and the potentially redemptive aspects of exile and return, and male interlocutors within the arts and heritage drew on these experiences in ways that were productive for representing the nation. At the same time, engaging with the outside in the context of state *kreolite* often meant refiguring the outside as inside, either through the creation of ‘villages’ and spaces for cultivation, or through bringing arcane, dangerous practices into new spaces and discursive regimes. In the latter case, the examples of traditional medicine and *moutya* illustrate how a cultural heritage discourse premised on ‘renaissance’ demands the domestication of potentially dangerous crafts and arts, as it is just these practices that have regenerative potential. In the process, their form and materiality changes in important ways.

Throughout the thesis as a whole, I am speaking both of a poetics of everyday life, and of everyday life as it is lived. Ideal conceptions of what it meant to be Creole were often flatly contradicted by the lived experiences of my interlocutors – indeed, the fact of diaspora and migration was a source of tension for this reason – but I have not argued on this basis that *kreolite* is internally inconsistent. The inside-outside binary is illustrative: while it was important to interlocutors that these were oppositional categories separated by a boundary, they also valued crossing this boundary, playing with it and re-configuring it. In fact, the extent to which the two categories interpenetrated each other was part of what made them productive; it was a facet of their vitality and their materiality. What remained constant was the distinction between a Seychellois Creole facility with material things, and

outsider ignorance of why they should be important, how to make and use them. This latter boundary was harder, but it too could be transgressed – after all, the historical reality of being Creole *and* transnational placed so many Seychellois along its fault line.

I have situated this thesis in relation to three bodies of literature: on creolization; materiality and objects; and intimacy at several scales. Seychellois are positioned at the juncture of two ways of that creolization has typically been understood: they are simultaneously mixed race people of African descent, living with the history of the plantation and the experience of colonialism (Vaughan 2005); and modern, cosmopolitan members of transnational families that span the world (Hannerz 1987). In Chapter 1, I interrogated how the term ‘roots’ encompasses both of these positions and seeks to naturalise them. Part of this naturalisation occurs in relation to the nation-state, through the discourse of *kreolite*, but it is significant that – especially given the history of Seychelles, and its relatively late Independence – being Creole is *prior* to the existence of Seychelles as a state, and prior to a modern conception of the transnational. What the term ‘Creole’ does is place Seychellois in a relationship with older ideas of movement and fixity; any use of it by the state, and by individual actors, must reckon with this history. In Chapter 2, I explored this relationship with movement and fixity as derived from property: the distinction between being the kind of person who owns, and therefore circulates things, as opposed to the kind of person who is owned and circulated as a thing. Such a distinction, like the modern conception of property itself, is racialized. Chapter 3 began to engage with how specific objects are produced as Creole, through the materials and techniques used to produce them, through the ways that they fit into the intimate life of the Creole family. Chapter 4 subsequently developed the dark side of this intimate family life, and the ways that it can have destructive material consequences. In both of these chapters, Creole

objects, like Creole people, have a recognisable appearance *and* a tendency towards variation and transformation.

While the emphasis on materials began with Chapter 1's discussion of the properties and characteristics of trees, it was developed most fully in Chapter 3 and 4, and was central to Chapter 6. The Creole objects – the house and its artefacts – described in Chapter 3 are Creole in part because they are made of wood or plant-derived materials and thus maintain a kind of continuity with trees, palms and herbs. This continuity means that they are positively-valued, and considered to contribute to the development of healthy and moral Creole people who come into contact with them (a judgement that is in part understood in relation to the materiality and characteristics of Creole people's bodies). But this positive valuation is based on their potential for flux, their vitality and responsiveness, and it was just this instability that, in Chapter 4, rendered them dangerous and harmful. Throughout the thesis, I described the anxiety that existed around the changing use of materials in everyday life, whether that was through the construction of concrete houses and flats, or the shifting availability of resources for visual artists. In Chapter 6, the examples of traditional medicine and *moutya* music provided an opportunity to explore how changes in materiality made in the name of cultural preservation inflect the form of knowledge being preserved. In both cases, traditional practices associated with material instability (and thus regenerative power) are being formalised and translated into new idioms: from the plant-based to the textual, from the organic to the synthetic, and from the wild to the domesticated. I have not argued that this is due to imposition of state (or global) power onto 'traditional' forms; rather, these cases exemplify the interplay of multiple scales of intimacy.

Utilising intimacy as an analytic has allowed me to draw connections between the different scales at which 'being Creole' takes place, and to consider how these scales construct each other. In Chapter 1, the "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 2014) of the nation-state was foregrounded, and trees and plants interrogated as emblems of the regenerative power through which the state seeks to naturalise itself. Through the discourse of plantation, cultivation, and a natural basis for physical and racial difference, the genealogical dimensions of the state emerged. In Chapter 2, this was taken up through the idea of both property and racial difference as 'inheritance', understandings that come to bear on the question of what constitutes Creole 'culture.' In Chapters 3 and 4, the everyday intimacy of the family was explored as both antithetical to state *kreolite* and yet necessary in order to constitute it; this family intimacy retains an ambivalence, and a potential for harm, that cannot be easily accommodated within the state's version or within the home. Chapter 5 interrogated the ways that the nation is constructed as oppositional to the family, absorbing problematic masculine elements of *kreolite* that are figured as harmful within the home, while suggesting that in a post-*koudeta*, post-socialist Seychelles, there is less space for these within the nation too. The fact that the outside, the hills and forests were reconfigured by the state into a kind of house suggests that the desirable outcome for the state was not rooted solely in masculine 'reputation', but about extending the boundaries of the domestic and 'respectable.' In Chapter 6, traditional medicine and *moutya* were explored as practices that operate across scales of intimacy – informing the body, sexuality, life within the family home, and the nation-state, and doing so largely through the specialised knowledge of practitioners. Being Creole, as a position situated between material understandings of difference, is premised on a fundamentally intimate relation to others that simultaneously constructs and troubles categories. In emphasising this latter point, I have argued that the ideas of intangible cultural heritage, imagined

communities, and immaterial values are not unsuitable frameworks through which to understand being Creole, but that they must be understood in terms of degrees of materiality rather than its presence or absence.

Intimacy was also a facet of my own relationships with my Seychellois family. During fieldwork, it was central to my methodology; I was able to participate and observe through my intimate relationships, not in spite of them. It has remained undiminished in importance throughout the process of writing up. In the context of my own relationships, intimacy has retained its ambivalent character and its power. In Chapters 3 and 4, I described the idealised binaries of inside-outside, female-male. During the Seychelles part of my fieldwork, I found it disorienting to have so much contact with the masculine, exterior dimensions of *kreolite*. The London part of fieldwork, when it had not necessitated excursions to *bal Sese/wa* and DJ nights, had been resolutely domestic. I had assumed that my presence as a female relative would have me pressed into service on the female side of the binary, but in Seychelles this scarcely ever happened, and relatives resisted my attempts to insert myself in this way. Gradually, I accepted that I had failed in some way – by being too foreign, or by insisting on spending time outside the house, engaged in activities that perhaps appeared, to those around me, trivial (and therefore within the remit of men). It was only upon returning in October 2017 that I experienced the full force of my family's collective affection, and I understood that I had done my time outside, as everyone must do when they return to the islands. The same standoffishness and mistrust that my mother and her siblings had experienced when they had returned from Kenya (see **A Family History**) had been the proper way of relating to me when I was unknown, a mouth to feed, a source of demands; the other side of it was a profound generosity and tenderness that I cannot fully articulate, but which resides in objects that I continue to

receive in the post – a woven rug, an old history book, a bag of *galet* (cassava bread), a drawing made by a young cousin.

Recalling Anthony's bleak pronouncement that "it's all shit, people are horrible" (Chapter 4, *Family Secrets*), as well as similar statements from other interlocutors, I return to my methods and their impact on both my questions and answers. When I presented my proposal to the Research Protocol Committee (on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture) at the outset of my work in Seychelles, Jean-Claude Mahoune told me that it was really about love. This is certainly true. Love, the "intimate event," is not innocent (Povinelli 2006:17), but "secures the self-evident good of social institutions, social distributions of life and death, and social responsibilities, for these institutions and distributions." If intimacy produces scale in the ways that I have described above, I too am an active participant in that production (and would be even if I did not wish to recognise that fact). As a member of a transnational Seychellois family, it is obvious why intimacy should have been significant to me, but it is also significant in terms of engagement with the state, and in relation to the academic project more generally. The Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture and its personnel generously granted me permission to carry out research, but it is not only out of gratitude that I exercise caution in describing the work the state does to revive 'culture.' Rather, it is important to recognise that I am engaging in the same work as the state and those affiliated with it. This thesis contributes to the movement of traditional medicine, *moutya*, and the arcane knowledge associated with the occult, into the public performance-space of cultural expression and the analytical scope of global heritage regimes. It therefore represents them as, to some extent, fixed. But it also moves them into another 'inside' space (a new house), and a domain that is simultaneously public and insular: anthropological analysis. For Seychellois, whom outside observers have so often slighted (I am thinking of all the times an interlocutor approached me, very hotly,

to talk about the things that someone had read in the archive and used as the basis for writing “a lot of nonsense”), accidentally or on purpose, the danger is that documenting social life in this way presents evidence that Creole people are bad people. The work of this thesis has been to put the specific anxieties that Seychellois have surrounding material conditions, family structures, and the harms that people do one another in conversation with wider theoretical discussions rooted in diverse ethnographic contexts. This is not to render them less unique or to make them the basis for a grand theory, but instead to demonstrate the way that interlocutors’ experiences can be framed by an interrogation of the legacy of the plantation, discourses of race and ethnicity derived from it, and the ways in which (despite the apparent ‘newness’ of transnational migration) some identities are treated as inherently mobile. These factors, both subtly and overtly underwritten by logics of white supremacy and sedentarist nationalism, contribute to the sense of being Creole as somehow entailing moral impoverishment. Yet, even as there is a deep seam of shame that runs through various kinds of *créolité*, and an equally pervasive violence, it would not be right to portray Seychellois as “suffering subjects” (Robbins 2013). Instead, this thesis makes a contribution to the “anthropology of the good” (ibid.) by demonstrating in concrete negotiations that Seychellois make in order to reconcile ideal sociality with imperfect reality. Part of this encompasses pride in being Creole: in being resourceful and creative, having a highly-developed aesthetic sense, knowing how to have fun, and showing what is understood as ‘real’ love – figured against a tepid, Euro-derived kind – to children and elders.

This project exists within particular limitations, not all of which were a product of my positionality or understanding – some were simply related to the pragmatics of carrying out research in the period of time that I did, and the kind of data gathered. The first issue is raised in both Archipelago and Chapter 1: the absence of a stronger archival dimension.

While I have interrogated the work that the term 'archivist' was made to do within the fine art world in Seychelles, as well as the importance of the archives as a space where family trees and genealogical knowledge were produced, there is a tension between the way this thesis engages with metaphor and the way that I treat archives almost as metaphorical. While it would never have been my aim to subordinate the knowledge of my interlocutors to a more 'legitimate' textual source of knowledge, access to the National Archives in Seychelles might have led my project in a more overtly historical direction and prompted me to engage with the ways that other nation-states – namely Britain and France – understood Creole life and Creole people. As it was, the aura of suspicion around archival knowledge caused me to focus instead on the multiplicity and variation of interlocutors' own historical narratives.

Another limitation relates to arcane knowledge and *grigri*. Throughout conversations with interlocutors, I sometimes sensed the possibility that there was a distinct corpus of occult knowledge (perhaps almost an alternative archive) but that details of it only emerged in rumour, jokes and 'superstition.' It is still possible that this is all there was to it, and that the idea of canonical *grigri* knowledge would only have arisen in the process of speculation of this kind, but further ethnographic research might be able to get at the answers to these questions. A current resurgence in overt acts of occult expression in Seychelles (manifested through particular kinds of vandalism: graffiti, grave-robbing, and painting Catholic shrines black) suggests that for some Seychellois, the occult is not defunct as a way of engaging with the world. Further research along these lines would, however, have to deal with the danger inherent in these practices and the representational harm that could be done to Seychellois simply by asking such questions – the way that it could feed back into a pre-existing stereotype of superstition, malice and gossip.

I think that one way of dealing with this problem would be to consider the compelling set of possibilities emerging from the intersection between Seychellois *grigri* and other kinds of Afro-diasporic spiritual practice and lore. While I have attempted to sketch some connections between these throughout the thesis, I have done so only where I have sufficient ethnographic evidence, and this has left some of the more intriguing connections unexplored. Accounts given to me by informants strongly suggest that the relationship with dead family members and the slave past is related to their actual material *presence* in the soil (particularly in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) – an idea that recurs across the African diaspora as well as the African continent (Fontein and Harries 2013; Johannessen 2011). Jeffery and Rotter’s description of the Chagossian *makalapo*, an instrument that is “a metre-long curved stick planted into the ground at one end, and then connected by a string to an interred sound box buried in a hole in the ground, which resonates when the string is plucked” and can be used to facilitate communication between the living and the ancestors (2018:12) suggests that such an idea may be present in various ways throughout the Indian Ocean African diaspora. Further study could map connections, through the soil, to Madagascar, and to the East African ethnic groups from whom so many Indian Ocean Afro-Creoles are likely descended. But I do not raise this topic as one of narrow historical and ethnographic interest; rather, I see it as another possible avenue for exploring global black identities and personhood in a way that would not centre on the black Atlantic, but provide new ways of thinking through the legacy of slavery just as this thesis attempts to.

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to consider what it means to treat diasporic connection not as mythic or imagined, nor as material *only* through skin and blood (Fontein and Harries 2013:118). Treating soil and plants as vital and provides one way of thinking through the materiality of relationships with the past that simultaneously troubles ideas of nation and inert territory. Through treating persons as material, and material things as

involved in personhood, this thesis sheds light on the ways that white personhood has frequently been bolstered by a materiality that, in relation to black identities, has been figured as problematic or suspicious. It thus contributes to a growing movement towards understanding black and Afro-diasporic identities in the context of “personhood,” (Macharia 2017) rather than subjectivity. If Olsen has had enough of the tyranny of the subject in relation to objects (2003:100), a group of people historically figured as objects are perhaps not best served by a move across the binary, into the opposite category. Such a move does not automatically restore what was denied through slavery and colonialism, which was neither the capacity to be a subject of power, nor subjectivity at an experiential level. What the black diaspora have historically been denied is recognition of personhood, and this denial is maintained and reproduced within Western nation-states in ways both subtle and overt. The denial of black personhood has consequences for everyone situated within the scheme of racial and national difference – because, as this thesis has shown, such a scheme depends on intimacy and proximity.

Works cited

- Abasi, A. K. 1995. Lua-lia, the 'fresh funeral': founding a house for the deceased among the Kasena of north-east Ghana. *Africa* 65(3), pp.448-475
- Abbink, J. 2005. Being young in Africa: the politics of despair and renewal. In *Vanguard or Vandals: youth, politics and conflict in Africa*, eds. Abbink, J., and van Kessel, W. M. J., pp.1-34. Leiden: Brill
- Abranches, Maria
 2013. When people stay and things make their way: airports, mobilities and materialities of a transnational landscape. *Mobilities* 8(4), pp.506-527
 2014. Remitting wealth, reciprocating health? The "travel" of the land from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal. *American Ethnologist* 41(2), pp.261-275
- Abu-Lughod, L. 1991. Writing against Culture. In *Recapturing Anthropology*. ed. R. Fox, pp. 137-162. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press
- Adams, JS. S., and McShane, T.O. 1996. *The myth of wild Africa: conservation without illusion*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Ahmad, Y. 2006. The scope and definitions of heritage: from tangible to intangible. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12(3), pp.292-300
- Ahmed, S.
 2006. *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
 2010. *The promise of happiness*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
 2013. *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. London: Routledge
- Alhassan, A. M., and Ahmed, Q.M. 2016. Averrhoa bilimbi Linn.: A review of its ethnomedicinal uses, phytochemistry, and pharmacology. *Journal of Pharmacy & Bioallied Sciences* 8(4), pp.265-271
- Allen, C. 2002. Creole: The problem of definition. In *Questioning Creole: Creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*. V. Shepherd and G. Richards (eds), pp. 47-63. Oxford: James Currey
- Alpers, E. A.
 2000 Recollecting Africa: diasporic memory in the Indian Ocean world. *African Studies Review* 43(1), pp.83-99
 2003 Flight to freedom: Escape from slavery among bonded Africans in the Indian Ocean world, c. 1750–1962. *Slavery and Abolition* 24(2), pp.51-68
- Alwan, H., Viswanathan, B., Rousson, V., Paccaud, F., & Bovet, P. 2011. Association between substance use and psychosocial characteristics among adolescents of the Seychelles. *BMC pediatrics* 11(1), pp.85
- Anderson, B. 2006. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books
- Appadurai, A. 1988. Introduction: commodities and the politics of value. In *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. Appadurai, A, pp. 3-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Apter, A. 2008. *The Pan-African Nation: oil and the spectacle of culture in Nigeria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Athanase, P. 2016. 13 year old stabs mother. In *Today in Seychelles*. 28 April 2016. Retrieved 17/12/18 from <https://www.facebook.com/todayinsej/posts/989867444384399>

- Baldacchino, G. 2018. Displaced Passengers: States, Movements, and Disappearances in the Indian Ocean. In *Connectivity in Motion*, Schnepel B., Alpers E. (eds), pp. 93-108. Palgrave Macmillan
- Bamberger, J. 1974. The myth of matriarchy: why men rule in primitive society. In *Women, culture, and society*, M. Z. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (eds), pp. 263-80. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- BBC. 2018. Man released over Seychelles politician murder. Retrieved 21/12/18 from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-45068241>
- Beardslee, T. 2016. Whom does heritage empower, and whom does it silence? Intangible cultural heritage at the Jemaa el Fnaa, Marrakech. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22(2), pp.89-101
- Beckford, G. L. 1972. *Persistent Poverty. Underdevelopment in plantation economies of the Third World*. London: Oxford University Press
- Benedict, B., and Benedict, M. 1982. *Men, Women and Money in Seychelles*. London: University of California Press
- Benjamin, W. 2004. *Selected Writings: 1927-1934*. M.P. Bullock, transl. Harvard: Harvard University Press
- Bennett, J. 2009. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Berlant, L. 1998. Intimacy: A special issue. *Critical Inquiry* 24(2), pp.281-288
- Besson, J. 1995. The Creolization of African-American Slave Kinship in Jamaican Free Village and Maroon Communities. In *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, S Palmié (ed.), pp.187-209. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press
- Billig, M. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage
- Blackmore, S., Chin, S.C., Chong Seng, L., Christie, F., Inches, F., Winda Utami, P., Watherston, N. and Wortley, A.H.,. 2012. Observations on the morphology, pollination and cultivation of coco de mer (*Lodoicea maldivica* (JF Gmel.) Pers., Palmae). *Journal of Botany*, pp.1-13
- Blackwood, E. 2005. Wedding bell blues: Marriage, missing men, and matrifocal follies. *American Ethnologist* 32(1), pp.3-19
- Bloch, M. 1998. Why Trees, too, are Good to Think with: Towards an Anthropology of the Meaning of Life. In *The social life of trees: anthropological perspectives on tree symbolism*, L. Rival (ed.), pp. 39-55. Oxford: Berg
- Bloch, M, and Parry, J.P (eds.). 1989 *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Blumenbach, J. F. 1865 [1775]. *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*. London: Anthropological Society
- Boddy, J. 1989. *Wombs and alien spirits: Women, men, and the Zar cult in northern Sudan*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press
- Bohannon, P. 1959. The impact of money on an African subsistence economy. *The Journal of Economic History* 19(4), pp.491-503
- Bolland, O. N. 2002. In *Questioning Creole: Creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*. V. Shepherd and G. Richards (eds.), pp. 15-46. Oxford: James Currey
- Bongmba, E. 2001. African Witchcraft: From Ethnography to Critique. In *Witchcraft Dialogues*, eds. Bond, G. C. and Ciekawy, D. M., pp.39-79. Ohio: Ohio University Press
- Bortolotto, C. 2007. From Objects to Processes: UNESCO'S'Intangible Cultural Heritage'. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (19), pp. 21-33

- Boswell, R.
 2005. Heritage tourism and identity in the Mauritian villages of Chamarel and Le Morne. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31(2), pp.283-295
 2006. *Le malaise créole: ethnic identity in Mauritiu*. Chicago: Berghahn Books
 2008. *Challenges to Identifying and Managing Intangible Cultural Heritage in Mauritius, Zanzibar and Seychelles*. CODESRIA: African Books Collective
 2017. *Sega as voice-work in the Indian Ocean region*. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 13(1), pp.92-110
- Bourdieu, P. 2013. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge
- Bragante, D., Manyara, G. and Kabuche, D. 2018. *Country Profile 2017: Seychelles*. Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa
- Brennan, J. R. 2012. *Taifa: making nation and race in urban Tanzania*. Athens: Ohio University Press
- Brown, M. F. 2005. Heritage trouble: recent work on the protection of intangible cultural property. *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12(1), pp. 40-61
- Bucholtz, M. 2002. Youth and cultural practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, pp.525-552
- Bunn, S. 1999. The importance of materials. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* (11), pp.15-28
- Burnham, J. 1968, Systems Esthetics. *Artforum* 7(1), pp.30-35
- Butler, J. 2011. For and against precarity. *Tidal: Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy* 1, pp.12-13
- Campling, L., Confiante, H. and Purvis, M.T. 2011. *Social policies in Seychelles*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat
- Carney, J., and Rosomoff, R.N. 2011. *In the shadow of slavery: Africa's botanical legacy in the Atlantic world*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Carrier, J. G. 1992. Emerging alienation in production: A Maussian history. *Man* 27(3), pp. 539-558
- Carter, M. 1995. *Servants, sirdars, and settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874*. Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Carter, M., and Kwong, J. N. F. 2009. *Abacus and Mah Jong: Sino-Mauritian Settlement and Economic Consolidation*. Leiden: Brill
- Chakravarti, S. 2016. Lessons from Seychelles. In *The Huffington Post*, 16 December 2016. Retrieved 21/12/18 from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/lessons-from-seychelles_b_8791158
- Chang-Him, F. 2002. Slavery and Family Life in Seychelles. *Transformation* 19(1), pp.48-51
- Chaudenson, R. 2002. *Creolization of language and culture*. London: Routledge
- Choppy, M-T. 2013. *Gramer Kreol Seselwa*. Au Cap: Lenstiti Kreol
- Choppy, P. 2006. The Seychelles 'moutya' as a theatre prototype and historical record. Seychelles Ministry for Youth, Sports and Culture. Retrieved 21/12/18, from <http://www.pfsr.org/uncategorized/the-seychelles-moutya-as-a-theatre-prototype-and-historical-record/>
- Christiansen, C., Utas, M., & Vigh, H. E. 2006. Introduction: navigating youth, generating adulthood. In *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*, eds. Christiansen, C., Utas, M., & Vigh, H. E., pp.9-28. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
- Clarke, R. L. W. 2000. Root Versus Rhizome: An'Epistemological Break'in Francophone Caribbean Thought. *Journal of West Indian Literature* 9(1), pp.12-41
- Clifford, James, and Marcus, G. E. 1986. *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press

- Collins, P. H. 2005. Black women and motherhood. In *Motherhood and Space*, Hardy S., Wiedmer C. (eds.), pp. 149-159. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Comaroff, J., and Comaroff, J. L.
 1999. Occult economies and the violence of abstraction: notes from the South African postcolony. *American Ethnologist* 26(2), pp.279-303.
 2018. Occult Economies, Revisited. In *Magical Capitalism*, Moeran B., de Waal Malefyt T. (eds.), pp. 289-320. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan
- Corsín Jiménez, A. 2011. Trust in anthropology. *Anthropological Theory* 11(2), pp.177-196
- Coupaye, L, and Pitrou, P. 2018. Introduction. The Interweaving of Vital and Technical Processes in Oceania. *Oceania* 88(1), pp.2-12
- Crenshaw, K/ W. 1988 Race, reform, and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimization in antidiscrimination law. *Harvard Law Review*, pp.1331-1387
- Césaire, A. 1969. *Return to My Native Land*. A. Bostock and J. Berger, (transl.). Harmondsworth: Penguin
- De Beauvoir, S. 1989. *The Second Sex*. H.M. Parshley, (transl.). London: Jonathan Cape
- De Queiroz, K. 2007. Species concepts and species delimitation. *Systematic biology* 56(6), pp.879-886
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Douglas, M., and Isherwood, B. 2002. *The World of Goods*. London: Routledge.
- Dreby, J. 2009. Gender and transnational gossip. *Qualitative Sociology* 32(1), pp.33-52
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 2015. *The Souls of Black Folk*. London: Routledge
- Ducrotoy, A. 1995. *Beautiful Isles, Beautiful People: A family in olde Seychelles, 1780-1995*. Kent: Rawlings
- Dumont, L. 1982. *On Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Durup, J.
 2010. Diaspora of Liberated African Slaves. *Blac Foundation*, retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://blacfoundation.org/black-history/>
 2013. *The Seychelles Islands and its First Landowners*. Seychelles: iMedia
 2014. Ozone treatment: dangerous and senseless. In *Today in Seychelles*. 25 September 2014. Retrieved 14/04/17 from <https://www.facebook.com/todayinsey/posts/721972881173858>
- Edmonds, A. 2010. *Pretty modern: beauty, sex, and plastic surgery in Brazil*. London: Duke University Press
- Eichler de Saint Jorre, M., Ardill, N. and Bossu-Picat, C. 1989. *Island Homes*. Seychelles: Artistic Production
- Ellen, R.
 1988. Fetishism. *Man* 23(2), pp. 213-235
 1998. Palms and the prototypicality of trees: Some questions concerning assumptions in the comparative study of categories and labels. In *The social life of trees*, Rival, L. (ed.). Pp. 57-79. Oxford: Berg
- Ellen, R., and Platten, S. 2011. The social life of seeds: the role of networks of relationships in the dispersal and cultural selection of plant germplasm. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(3), pp.563-584
- Emerson, S. 2010. White sand, black magic. In *The Times*, 20 June 2010. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/white-sand-black-magic-mnx2vjx0ptw>
- Eriksen, T. H.
 1993. In which sense do cultural islands exist? *Social Anthropology*, 1(1b), pp.133-147

1998. *Common denominators: ethnicity, nation-building and compromise in Mauritius*. Oxford: Berg
1999. *Tu dimunn pu vini kreol: The Mauritian creole and the concept of creolization*. University of Oxford. Transnational Communities Programme
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1937. *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon
- Fanon, F. 2008 (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto
- Feldman, B. 2014. The Triumphant Rise of the Shitpic. In *The Awl*. 17 December 2014. Retrieved 08/09/17 from <https://www.theawl.com/2014/12/the-triumphant-rise-of-the-shitpic/>
- Fellows, K. R., and Delle, J.A. 2015. Marronage and the Dialectics of Spatial Sovereignty in Colonial Jamaica. In *Current Perspectives on the Archaeology of African Slavery in Latin America*. P.P.A. Funari and C.E. Orser Jr (eds.), pp. 117-132. New York: Springer
- Fernandez, J. W. 1998. Trees of Knowledge of Self and Other in Culture: On models for the moral imagination. In *The social life of trees*, Rival, L. (ed.), pp. 81-110. Oxford: Berg.
- Ferrari, M. 1999. *Sunshine and Shadows: A Personal Story*. Atlanta: Minerva
- Fleischmann Schwarz, C T & Nick, I.M. 2017. "Mon respe tou lezot lalang!": a case study of native teacher attitudes towards Creole-mediated multilingual education in Seychelles. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, pp.1-15
- Fontein, J, and Harries, J. 2013. The vitality and efficacy of human substances. *Critical African Studies* 5(3), pp.115-126
- Foucault, M. 1988. *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press
- Franda, M. 1982. *The Seychelles: Unquiet islands*. Hampshire: Gower
- Freeman, C. 2002. Mobility, rootedness, and the Caribbean higgler: Production, consumption and transnational livelihoods. In *Work and Migration: Life and livelihoods in a globalizing world*, Olwig, K.F., and Sørensen (eds), N.N., pp.61-81. London: Routledge.
- Freud, S.
1955 (1909)-a. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume X (1909): Two Case Histories ('Little Hans' and the 'Rat Man')*. J. Strachey, (transl.). London: Hogarth.
1955 (1909)-b. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. J. Strachey, (transl.). London: Hogarth.
- Gallo, E. 2013. Migrants and their money are not all the same: Migration, remittances and family morality in rural South India. *Migration Letters*, 10(1), pp.33-46
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic books
- Geisler, G., and Pardiwalla, M. 2010. Socialization patterns and boys' underperformance in Seychellois schools. *Journal statistique africain* 11, pp.62-84
- Geismar, H. 2015. Anthropology and heritage regimes. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, pp.71-85
- Gell, A. 1998. *Art and agency: an anthropological theory*. Oxford: Clarendon
- Georges, B. 2011. *The Fortunate Islands: Gossip from the Seychelles*. Mahe: Calusa Bay
- Geschiere, P.
1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: politics and the occult in postcolonial Africa*. London: University of Virginia Press
2013. *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust: Africa in Comparison*. Chicago: University of Chicago

- Gilroy, P. 2013. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Routledge
- Glissant, É. 1997. *Poetics of relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Gluckman, M. 1963. Papers in honor of Melville J. Herskovits: Gossip and scandal. *Current anthropology* 4(3), pp.307-316
- Gordon, C. 1885. Eden and Golgotha. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 17(2), pp.78-81
- Graeber, D.
 2011. Consumption. *Current anthropology* 52(4), pp.489-511
 2012. *Debt: The first 5000 years*. London: Penguin
- Gruber, J. W. 1970. Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 72(6), pp.1289-1299
- Gudeman, S. 2016 *Anthropology and economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Habermas, J. 1991. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. T. Burger and F. Lawrence, (transl.). Cambridge: MIT press
- Hagan, M.B. 2016. Meet Seychelles oldest herbalist- 82 year old Ferdinand Vidot. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://www.mollybhagan.com/2016/07/meet-seychelles-oldest-herbalist-82-year-old-ferdinand-vidot/>
- Hall, D. 2013 *Land*. Cambridge: Polity
- Hall, S. 2017. *Familiar stranger: A life between two islands*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Hallam, E, and Ingold, T. 2016. *Making and growing: Anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. London: Routledge
- Hann, C. 2011. *Economic Anthropology*. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, Callan. H. (ed), pp.1-16. Wiley
- Hannerz, U.
 1987. The world in creolisation. *Africa*, 57(04), pp.546-559.
 1967 Gossip, networks and culture in a black American ghetto. *Ethnos* 32(1-4), pp.35-60
- Haring, L. 2007. *Stars and keys: Folktales and creolization in the Indian Ocean*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Harney, S, and Moten, F. 2013. *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study*. New York: Minor Compositions
- Harris, C. I. 1993. Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law review* 106(8), pp.1707-1791
- Haspelmath, M, and Tadmor, U. 2009. *Loanwords in the world's languages: a comparative handbook*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter
- Hay, P. 2006. A phenomenology of islands. *Island Studies Journal* 1(1), pp.19-42
- Hegel, G.W.F.
 1979 [1807] *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A.V. Miller, transl. Oxford: Oxford University Press
 2001 [1830]. *The philosophy of history*, trans. J. Sibree, transl. New York: Dover
- Heidegger, M. 1971. Poetry, language, thought. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1), pp.117-123
- Henderson, S. 1982. The Seychelles National Youth Service: an experiment in socialist education. *Community Development Journal*, 17(3), pp.234-241
- Herder, J. G. 1803 *Outlines of a philosophy of the history of man*. London: J. Johnson
- Herzfeld, M.
 2005. *Cultural intimacy: Social poetics in the nation-state*. London: Routledge.
 2014. *Cultural intimacy: Social poetics in the nation-state*. London: Routledge
- Hickling, F. W., and Hutchinson, G. 2000. Post-colonialism and mental health: Understanding the roast breadfruit. *Psychiatric Bulletin* 24(3), pp. 94-95

- Hintzen, P. C. 2002. Race and Creole ethnicity in the Caribbean. In *Questioning Creole: Creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*, eds. Shepherd, V., and Richards, G., pp.92-110. Oxford: James Currey
- Hochschild, A, and Machung, A. 2003. *The second shift: Working families and the revolution at home*. London: Penguin
- Hochschild, A. R. 1983. *The Managed Heart*. London: University of California Press
- Hofmeyr, I., Kaarsholm, P. and Frederiksen, B.F. 2011. Introduction: print cultures, nationalisms and publics of the Indian Ocean. *Africa* 81(1), pp.1-22
- hooks, bell. 1992 *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boston: South End
- Hunt, L. 2013. *Family Romance of the French Revolution*. London: Routledge
- Husserl, E. 1967 [1931]. *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. London: Routledge
- Ingold, T.
2007. Materials against materiality. *Archaeological dialogues* 14(1), pp.1-16
2009 The textility of making. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34(1), pp.91-102
- Isaac, N. J., Mallet, J, and Mace, G.M. 2004. Taxonomic inflation: its influence on macroecology and conservation. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 19(9), pp. 464-469
- Jeffery, L., and Rotter, R.
2016. Sustenance, nourishment, and cultivation: plants as living cultural heritage for dispersed Chagossians in Mauritius, Seychelles, and the UK. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22(2), pp.296-313
2018. Safeguarding sega: transmission, inscription, and appropriation of Chagossian intangible cultural heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25
- Jeffery, L.
2010a. Creole festivals and Afro-Creole cosmopolitanisms in Mauritius. *Social anthropology* 18(4):425-432
2010b. Forced displacement, onward migration and reformulations of 'home' by Chagossians in Crawley, UK. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 36(7)pp.1099-1117.
2013. *Chagos islanders in Mauritius and the UK: forced displacement and onward migration*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Johannessen, S. F. 2011. Cleaning For The Dead: The Chagossian Pilgrimage to Their Homeland. In *Eviction from the Chagos Islands*, Evers, S. and Kooy, M., pp. 183-216. Leiden: Brill
- Johnson, S. 1877. *A Dictionary of the English Language: In which the Words are Deduced from Their Originals; and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers. To which are Prefixed, a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*. London: Reeves and Turner
- Kennedy, M. 2017. *Art in Seychelles – Then and Now*. Seychelles: Arterial Network
- Kiev, A. 1963. Beliefs and delusions of West Indian immigrants to London. *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 109(460), pp. 356-363
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 2004. Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production1. *Museum international* 56(1-2), pp.52-65
- Kopytoff, I. 1986. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. A. Appadurai, (ed.), pp. 63-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Kothari, U. 2012. Contesting colonial rule: Politics of exile in the India Ocean. *Geoforum* 43, pp. 697-706

- Kothari, U., & Wilkinson, R. 2013. Global change, small island state response: restructuring and the perpetuation of uncertainty in Mauritius and Seychelles. *Journal of International Development*, 25(1), pp.92-107
- Kuper, A. 2003. The return of the native. *Current anthropology* 44(3), pp.389-402
- Kurin, R. 2004. Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: a critical appraisal. *Museum international* 56(1-2), pp. 66-77
- Lambek, M. 1993 *Knowledge and practice in Mayotte: Local discourses of Islam, sorcery and spirit possession*. Toronoto: University of Toronto Press
- Latour, B. 2012. *We have never been modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Le Brun, O. 1982. The New Education in the National Youth Service (NYS): An analysis of the first year and prospects for the second year. Paris: UNESCO
- Lee, C. 1976. *Seychelles : political castaways*. London: Elm Tree Books
- Levitt, P. 1998. Social remittances: Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *International Migration Review*, pp.926-948
- Li, T.M. 2014. What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39(4), pp. 589-602
- Lionnet, G.
1972. *The Seychelles*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles
2011. *Castor*. Seychelles National Archives. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://www.sna.gov.sc/castor-.aspx>
- London, M. 1986. Mental illness among immigrant minorities in the United Kingdom. *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 149(3), pp.265-273
- Lowenthal, D.
2005. Natural and cultural heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 11(1). pp. 81-92
2015. *The past is a foreign country: revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Macharia, K.
2016. On being area-studied: A litany of complaint. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 22(2), pp.183-190
2017. *Queer African Studies: Personhood and Pleasure*. Gukira, retrieved 02/11/18 from <https://gukira.wordpress.com/2017/05/03/queer-african-studies-personhood-pleasure/>
- Mackie, E. 2005. Welcome the outlaw: pirates, maroons, and Caribbean countercultures. *Cultural Critique* (59), pp.24-62
- Mahoune, J-C. 2015. Traditional dances / Games of the Republic of Seychelles. *Seychelles Ministry for Youth, Sports and Culture*, retrieved 21/12/18 from <http://www.pfsr.org/seychelles-traditional-dances-games/traditional-dancesgames-of-the-republic-of-Seychelles/>
- Malbrook, J and Bonnelame, B. 2017. Seybuzz's scary Halloween: Haunting tales of a creepier Seychelles. *Seychelles News Agency*. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/6163/Seybuzz%27s+scary+Halloween+Haunting+tales+of+a+creepier+Seychelles>
- Malinowski, B. 2013. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge
- Malkki, L.
1992. National Geographic: the rooting of peoples and the territorialisation of national identity among scholars and refugees. *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1), pp.24-44

1995. Refugees and exile: From "refugee studies" to the national order of things. *Annual review of anthropology* 24(1), pp. 495-523
- Mancham, J.R.
2005. *Seychelles: Personalities of Yersteryear*. Printec: Mahé
1983. *Paradise Raped: Life, Love and Power in the Seychelles*. London: Methuen
- Mannoni, O. 1990. *Prospero and Caliban: The psychology of colonization*. New York: Praeger
- Mantz, J. W. 2007. How a huckster becomes a custodian of market morality: Traditions of flexibility in exchange in Dominica. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 14(1-2), pp.19-38
- Marcus, G. E. 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology* 24(1), pp. 95-117
- Martin, M.P. 2007. The Creolization of Environmental Education: The Creolization of Environmental Education: Exploring Hybrid Spaces in Seychelles. *EEASA Monograph- Learning in a Changing World*, pp. 98-104
- Matatiken, D., et al. 2011. Conservation and Management of Medicinal Plants: Experiences from Seychelles. *Asian Biotechnology and Development Review* 13(3), pp. 61-76
- Mathiot, T. 2016. The National Monuments of Seychelles. Seychelles Ministry for Youth, Sports and Culture, retrieved 14/04/17 from <http://www.pfsr.org/history-of-seychelles/the-national-monuments-of-seychelles/>
- Maurel, H. 2019. Dépouillement Seychelles (personal webpage). Retrieved 24/05/17 from http://henri.maurel.pagesperso-orange.fr/pool&johnstone_d01.htm
- Mauss, M. 2002. *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge
- Mbembe, A.
1992. Provisional notes on the postcolony. *Africa* 62(1), pp.3-37
2017. *Critique of Black Reason*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- McAteer, W.
1991. *Rivals in Eden : the history of Seychelles, 1742-1827*. Seychelles: Pristine
2000. *Hard times in paradise : the history of the Seychelles, 1827-1919*. Seychelles: Pristine
2002. *Rivals in Eden : the history of Seychelles, 1742-1827.*, Seychelles: Pristine
- McKittrick, K. 2011.
On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography* 12(8), pp. 947-963
2013. Plantation futures. *Small Axe* 17(3), pp.1-15
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1968. *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press
- Miller, D.
1991. Absolute freedom in Trinidad. *Man*, pp.323-341
1994. *Modernity, an ethnographic approach*. Oxford: Berg
2005. *Acknowledging consumption*. Routledge
2008. *The comfort of things*. Cambridge: Polity
2010. *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity
- Minh-Ha, T. T. 1989. *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. File:Coat_of_arms_of_Seychelles.png adapted from *New National Symbols of the Republic of the Seychelles*, Adopted 18th June 1996. Retrieved 07/12/18 from Wikimedia Commons,

- https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Coats_of_arms_of_Seychelles#/media/File:Coat_of_arms_of_Seychelles.svg
- Ministry of Social Affairs. 2014. Social development in Seychelles. *Seychelles Nation*. 23 June 2014. Retrieved 07.12.18 from <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=242079>
- Mintz, S. W., & Price, S (eds.). 1985. *Caribbean contours*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
- Mintz, S. W., & Price, R. 1976. *An anthropological approach to the Afro-American past: a Caribbean perspective* (Vol. 2). Philadelphia: Institute for Humane Studies
- Mitchell, T. 1998. Fixing the economy. *Cultural studies* 12(1), pp.82-101
- Moka, C. 2016. *Lepok Ze Resi*. Au Cap: Lenstiti Kreol
- Moynihán, D. P., Rainwater, L., & Yancey, W. L. 1967. *The Negro family: The case for national action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Mudimbe, V. Y. 1988. *The Invention of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Munn, N. 1976. *The Fame of Gawa: a Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society*. London: Duke University Press
- Naylor, M L. 2005 Heeding the Creole Voice (in the Seychelles Islands): Alternatives to race and nation as identifiers of cultural value. *Image & Narrative* 10
- Ndjio, B. 2008. Mokoagne moni: sorcery and new forms of wealth in Cameroon. *Past and Present* 199(3), pp. 271-289
- Olsen, B. 2003. Material culture after text: re-membering things. *Norwegian Archeological Review* 36(2), pp.87-104
- Olwig, K. F. 2007. *Caribbean journeys: An ethnography of migration and home in three family networks*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Oswin, N. and Olund, E. 2010. *Governing intimacy*. London: Sage
- Ozanne, J.A.F. 1936. *Coconuts and Creoles*. P Allen and Company Limited
- Paine, R. 1967. What is gossip about? An alternative hypothesis. *Man* 2(2), pp.278-285
- Palmié, S.
2006. Creolization and its discontents. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35, pp.433-456
2006b. Thinking with Ngangas: Reflections on embodiment and the limits of "objectively necessary appearances". *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48(4), pp.:852-886
- Parent, M- C. 2018. *Le moutya à l'épreuve de la modernité seychelloise: Pratiquer un genre musical emblématique dans les Seychelles d'aujourd'hui (océan Indien)*. Thèse de doctorat. Université de Montréal. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://www.theses.fr/2018AZUR2002>
- Patterson, O. 1970 Slavery and slave revolts: a socio-historical analysis of the first maroon war Jamaica, 1655–1740. *Social and economic studies*, pp.289-325
- Pearson, M. 2003. *The Indian Ocean*. London: Routledge
- Penrose, B. and Freeman, S. 1986. Private eye sought in killer hunt; British police investigation into murder of exiled Seychelles leader Hoarau. *Sunday Times*, 5 January 1986. Retrieved 24/5/19 from http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A118009188/AONE?u=ed_itw&sid=AONE&xid=f1c50b16.
- Pierre-Louis, P. 2012. Bann keksoz mon manman ti dir mwan. In *Voyaz San Valiz*. Pp. 6. London: Rila
- Polanyi, K. 2001 [1944]. *The great transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press

- Potter, R. B., and Phillips, J. 2006. "Mad dogs and transnational migrants?" Bajan-Brit second-generation migrants and accusations of madness. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(3), pp.586-600
- Povinelli, E. A.
2002. Notes on gridlock: Genealogy, intimacy, sexuality. *Public Culture* 14(1). Pp.215-238
2006. *The empire of love: Toward a theory of intimacy, genealogy, and carnality*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Prentice, R. 2012. "No One Ever Showed Me Nothing": Skill and Self-Making among Trinidadian Garment Workers. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 43(4), pp. 400-414
- Pyndiah, G. 2016. Decolonizing creole on the Mauritius islands: Creative practices in Mauritian Creole. *Island Studies Journal* 11(2), pp.485-504
- Radin, M. 1982. Property and personhood. *Stanford Law Review* 34(5), pp.957-1015
- Rapport, N., and Dawson, A. 1998. Home and movement: a polemic. In (eds.) *Migrants of identity: perceptions of home in a world of movement*, pp.19-38. Oxford: Berg
- René, F.A. 1984. *Striving for Progress*. Victoria: Ministry of Education and Information
- Rival, L (ed.). 1998. *The social life of trees: anthropological perspectives on tree symbolism*. Oxford: Berg
- Roane, J. T. 2019. Plotting the Black Commons. *Souls*, pp.1-28
- Robbins, J.
2009. Rethinking gifts and commodities: reciprocity, recognition, and the morality of exchange. *Economics and morality: Anthropological approaches*, pp.43-58
2013. Beyond the suffering subject: Toward an anthropology of the good. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 19(3), pp.447-462
- Rosa, J, and Burdick, C. 2016. Language ideologies. *Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*, pp.103-123
- Rosa, J, and Flores, N. 2017 Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society* 46(5), pp.21-647
- Sahlins, M. 2017. *Stone age economics*. London: Routledge
- Said, E. 2000. Reflections on exile. In (ed.) *Reflections on exile and other essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Sanday, P. R. 1998. Matriarchy as a Sociocultural Form: An Old Debate in a New Light. In *16th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association*, Melaka, Malaysia, July, pp. 1-7
- Sauer, J. D. 1967. *Plants and man on the Seychelles coast : a study in historical biogeography*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press
- Saul, M. 1991. The Bobo'House'and the Uses of Categories of Descent. *Africa*, pp.71-97
- Scarr, D.
1998. *Slaving and slavery in the Indian Ocean*. Basingstoke: Macmillan
2000. *Seychelles since 1770 : history of a slave and post-slavery society*. London: Hurst
- Schneider, D. M. 1980. *American kinship: A cultural account*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scott, J. C. 1985. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale: Yale University Press
- Scruton, R. 1993 Oikophobia. *Journal of Education* 175(2), pp.93-98
- Senghor, L. S. 1974. Negritude. *Indian Literature*, pp.269-273
- Seychelles National Archives. 2019. Family tree research. Retrieved 25/05/19 from <http://www.sna.gov.sc/family-tree-research.aspx>

- Seychelles Nation. 2012. Up-Close ... with the National Arts Council's chief executive Jimmy Savy-'My wish is to make a difference in people's lives. 30 December 2012. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <http://www.nation.sc/article.html?id=257144>
- Sheffer, G. 2003. *Diaspora politics: At home abroad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Shuval, J.T. 2000. Diaspora migration: Definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm. *International migration* 38(5), pp.41-56
- Singh, S. 2006. Towards a sociology of money and family in the Indian diaspora. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 40(3), pp.375-398
- Singh, S., Robertson, S., and Cabraal, A. 2012. Transnational family money: Remittances, gifts and inheritance. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33(5), pp.475-492
- Skeat, Walter William. 1884. *An etymological dictionary of the English language*. Oxford: Clarendon
- Smith, M.G. 1962. *West Indian family structure*. Seattle: University of Washington Press
- Smith, R. T. 1996. *The matrifocal family*. London: Routledge
- Spillers, H. J. 1987. Mama's baby, papa's maybe: An American grammar book. *Diacritics* 17(2), pp.65-81
- St Ange, A. 2007. *Seychelles: The Cry of a People: a document recording the aspirations and demands made by a people, 1964 - 2006*. Victoria: Alain St Ange
- Stack, C. B. 1974. Sex roles and survival strategies in an urban black community. In *Woman, culture, and society*. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., pp. 113-128. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- State House. 2018. President Faure Presented with the Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity report
- Stoler, A. L. 2010 *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the intimate in colonial rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Strachan, I. G. 2002. *Paradise and plantation: Tourism and culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*. London: University of Virginia Press
- Stratford, E., Baldacchino, G., Farbotko, C., McMahon, E., and Harwood, A. 2011. Envisioning the Archipelago. *Island Studies Journal*, 6(2), pp.113-130
- Tanner, N. 1974. Matrifocality in Indonesia and Africa and among black Americans. In *Women, culture, and society*, eds. M. Z. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere, pp.129-156. Stanford University Press
- Taussig, M.
1977. The genesis of capitalism amongst a South American peasantry: devil's labor and the baptism of money. *Comparative studies in society and history* 19(2), pp.130-155
1999. *Defacement: Public secrecy and the labor of the negative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
2018. *Mimesis and alterity: A particular history of the senses*. London: Routledge
- Taylor, D. 2005. *Launching out into the deep : the Anglican Church in the history of the Seychelles to 2000 AD*. Victoria: Board of Church Commissioners, Diocese of Seychelles
- Thomson, A. 2012. Walking among the Dead amongst the Living. *Performance Research* 17(4)pp. 27-32
- Tilley, C. 2008. From the English cottage garden to the Swedish allotment: Banal nationalism and the concept of the garden. *Home Cultures* 5(2), pp.219-249
- Tirant, N. 2016 International Day for the victims of enforced disappearances: remembering our "disappeared". *Today in Seychelles*. 1 September 2016 . Retrieved 07/12/18 from <https://www.facebook.com/todayinsey/posts/1085941858110290:0>
- Today in Seychelles*.

2016. Behind the scenes with Ras Ricky: 'I would say I'm a revolutionist'. 19 September 2016. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <https://www.facebook.com/todayinsey/posts/behind-the-scenes-with-ras-ricky-i-would-say-im-a-revolutionisttoday-speaks-to-lo/1101265496577926/>
2014. Black magic on the rise? 23 October 2014. Retrieved 07/12/18 from <https://www.facebook.com/todayinsey/photos/a.417785501592599.84226.414719135232569/734732616564551/>
- Trouillot, M. R. 1992. The Caribbean region: an open frontier in anthropological theory. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, pp.19-42
- Tsing, A.
 2000. Inside the economy of appearances. *Public Culture* 12(1), pp.115-144
 2012. Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species: for Donna Haraway. *Environmental Humanities* 1(1), pp.141-154
- Van Binsbergen, W. 2001. Witchcraft in modern Africa as virtualised boundary conditions of the kinship order. In *Witchcraft Dialogues*, Bond, G. C. and Ciekawy, D. M. (eds.). Ohio: Ohio University Press
- Vaughan, M. 2005. *Creating the creole island: Slavery in eighteenth-century Mauritius*. Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Veevers-Carter, W. D. 1970. *Island Home*. London: Robert Hale
- Vergès, F.
 2010. Wandering Souls and Returning Ghosts: Writing the History of the Dispossessed. *Yale French Studies*, (118/119), pp.136-154
 1999. *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage*. London: Duke University Press.
- Victor, P. 2007. *Kastor: en pyes mizikal*. O Cap: Lenstiti Kreol
- Vigh, H. 2009. Wayward migration: on imagined futures and technological voids. *Ethnos*, 74(1), pp.91-109
- Vivieros De Castro, E. 1998 Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4(3), pp.469-489
- Walcott, D. 1986. *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*. London: Macmillan
- Warin, M., and Dennis, S. 2005. Threads of memory: Reproducing the cypress tree through sensual consumption. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26(1-2):159-170
- Waterman, R. A. 1999. African Influence on the Music of the Americas. *Write me a few of your lines: A blues reader*, ed. Tracy, S.C., pp.17-27. Amherst: University of Massachussets
- White, L. 1994. Between Gluckman and Foucault: historicizing rumour and gossip. *Social Dynamics* 20(1):75-92
- Wilson, M. 2014. *Everyday Moral Economies: Food, politics and scale in Cuba*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell
- Wilson, P.
 1969. Reputation and respectability: a suggestion for Caribbean ethnology. *Man* 4(1):70-84
 1973. *Crab antics : the social anthropology of English-speaking Negro societies of the Caribbean*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Wortham, S. 2008. Linguistic anthropology of education. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 37, pp.37-51
- Wynter, S. 1971. Novel and history, plot and plantation. *Savacou* 5, pp.95-102
- Yoon, M. Y. 2011. Factors hindering 'larger' representation of women in parliament: The case of Seychelles. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 49(1), pp. 8-114

- Young, R. J. C. 2005. *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race*. London: Routledge
- Zelizer, V. A. 2005. *The Purchase of Intimacy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press